

GOOD **ORGANIC** **Gardening**

grow naturally, eat fresh, live sustainably

MAY/JUNE

JENNIFER STACKHOUSE

Clever crops: celtuce & licorice
Disability gardens
+ Vegies to plant now

MELISSA KING

Standout plants
for your patch
+ Feijoa & mulberries

HOW TO
**BRAID
GARLIC
& STRING
ONIONS**

A MINI ORCHARD WITH
dwarf trees

Preserving the harvest | The power of passionflower

MEGG MILLER

Winter care for
feathered friends

CLAIRE BICKLE

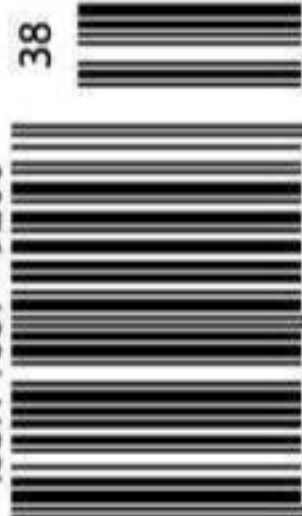
Heaven scent!
Fragrant pelargoniums
+ Plants for pets

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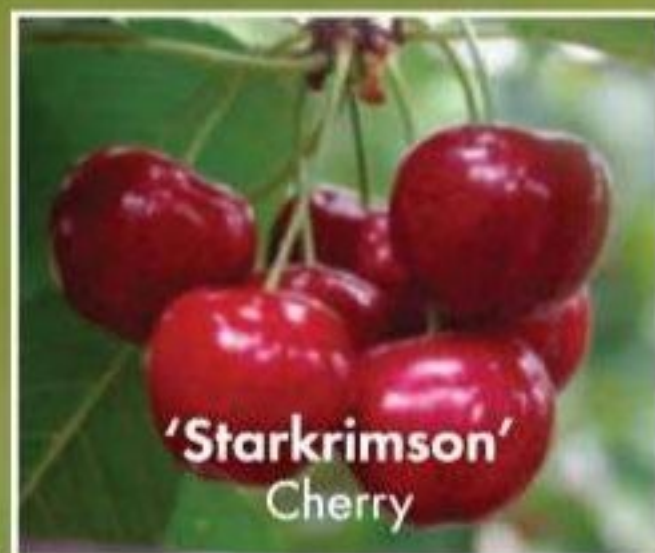




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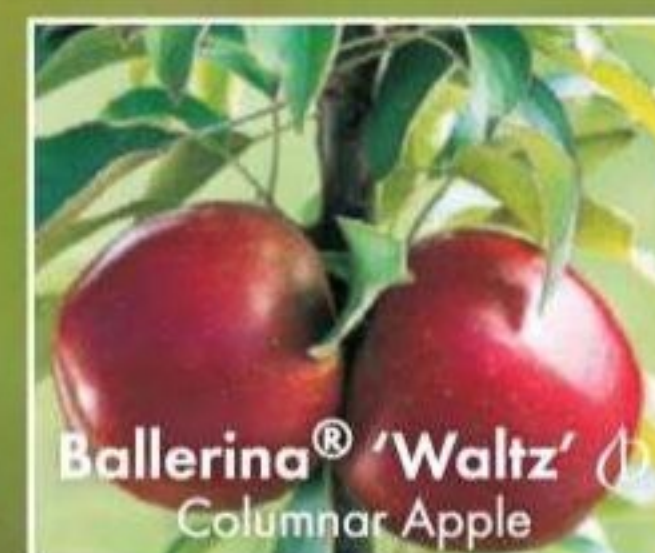
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Braiding and stringing garlic and onions is a great way to showcase them



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THIS ISSUE

write this as we go into the gentle season of autumn, but how could we forget the searing summer we experienced this year? The NSW Hunter Valley, where I live, is one of the areas that copped the worst of it and, for the first time, my summer vegie garden succumbed to the intense heat. Plants were bolting, wilting and just looking sad. Finally, to put an end to its struggle and mine, I opened the gate and let the chickens do their worst, then replanted when the weather became saner.

It made me realise again the importance of good garden planning. In my case, I could have thought more about protection from the savage mid-afternoon western sun in temperatures like we experienced. Garden planning needs to take account of other unanticipated factors, too. What if water becomes a dire problem? What if you become less mobile due to injury, illness or age? Just being in a garden has been shown to be highly therapeutic; being able to grow things even more so. This issue, Jennifer Stackhouse looks at ways to make a garden accessible and manageable for people with a disability.

Claire Bickle offers some ideas on plants to grow for our pets, whether it's to provide them with much-needed minerals and vitamins, help their digestive systems, keep parasites and bugs at bay or prevent stomach

ulcers (horses!). She also introduces us to the fragrant delights of scented pelargoniums — so many to choose from, with quite different perfumes.

Other featured plants include kale, parsnip, asparagus, bay laurel, celtuce and licorice covered by Jennifer; and from Melissa, mulberry and feijoa as well as a range of dwarf fruit trees for the compact home orchard.

Our power plant is another one grown more for its foliage, though it does produce edible fruit and spectacular flowers: passionflower, specifically *Passiflora incantata*.

We've gone a little crafty in The Shed with how-tos on braiding garlic and stringing onions. If you've plaited hair, it'll be a cinch. Not only is this a great way to showcase your homegrown alliums, but this method of storage makes them last longer because there's better airflow around them than in a vegie bin.

Megg Miller looks at winter care for the chooks, plus we have the usual inspiring Gardening Folk profiles as well as the story of how a farming couple in outer Sydney made the changeover to organic growing. Read about the amazing things it did for their soil, their harvest and their lives.

Wishing you a pleasant and productive autumn/winter,

Kerry

OOPS!

If you bought our last issue (Vol 7 No 6), please turn to **Page 41** and cross out Jan Feb in the headings and replace with March April. What to plant is correct in each region for the months of March and April. We apologise for the error and any confusion caused by it.

ORGANIC Gardening

grow naturally, eat fresh, live sustainably

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ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS AND UPDATES COMPILED BY JO IMMIG



Save our seeds

BIODIVERSITY OF SEED

It's not something that immediately springs to mind when you think about the multitude of environmental challenges we face today, but the loss of seed biodiversity in agriculture is central to many of them, including climate change.

The magnitude of the loss is staggering. Up to 75 per cent of the genetic diversity of agricultural crops has disappeared in less than a hundred years and we continue to lose one to two per cent of crop genetic resources every year.

How did this happen? For thousands of years, farmers grew crops and saved their seeds that were adapted to the micro-environments they thrived in. The enormous diversity of ancient and heirloom varieties originated through this evolutionary process of breeding and provided farmers with reliable seeds suited to their climates and needs.

The transition to modern plant breeding techniques during the 20th century's "green revolution" changed all this. The focus shifted from evolutionary breeding to the selection of seeds for the greatest yields and for widespread application.

Seed diversity collected over millennia shifted out of the hands of farmers and into the hands of those seeking to profit from the sale of seeds.

Industrial agriculture today demands genetic uniformity and is totally dependent on synthetic fertilisers, pesticides, hybridised

and genetically modified seeds. Vast tracts of land are planted out to a single, high-yielding variety or a handful of genetically similar cultivars, which have lost their ability to adapt and evolve to suit their environment.

We've lost not only the diversity of seeds but also the knowledge and traditional agricultural systems adapted by farmers to successfully grow and save the seeds.

From an evolutionary perspective, diversity and adaptation are fundamental to life and key to our resilience in the face of climate change.

Genetically diverse crops that evolve to meet changing conditions are needed to produce reliable yields, rather than crops selected to produce maximum yields dependent on synthetic inputs and perfect conditions that risk total crop failure when there's a flood, drought or some new insect, fungus or virus.

Resource: Salvatore Ceccarelli, "The Centrality of Seed: Building Agricultural Resilience Through Plant Breeding", *Independent Science News* 2016.

HERBICIDE USED IN AUSTRALIA IS LINKED TO PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Drinking just one sip of the herbicide paraquat can be fatal and there's no antidote. Tragically, many farmers around the world each year use it to suicide. Paraquat is banned in the European Union, and the US EPA is currently determining whether to also ban it.



JO IMMIG

Jo is an environmental scientist, photographer and writer. She has worked in the environment movement for decades and is co-ordinator of the National Toxics

Network, an organisation dedicated to creating a toxic-free future. She has written many articles for magazines and is the author of two books: *Toxic Playground* and *Safer Solutions*.

Australia has 162 products registered for widespread use to control grasses and broadleaf weeds.

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) has been reviewing paraquat since 1997 but appears to have done little in response to the convincing body of scientific evidence that exposure to paraquat is a cause of Parkinson's disease.

In a 2016 regulatory filing on paraquat, the US EPA stated, "There is a large body of epidemiology data on paraquat dichloride use and Parkinson's disease." It also found "elevated odds of Parkinson's disease among those who used paraquat in comparison to those who did not".

A 2011 study led by the Parkinson's Institute and the US National Institutes of Health drew on an agricultural health survey of farmers and their spouses as well as others who handled pesticides. Those studied were two-and-a-half times more likely to develop Parkinson's if they used paraquat.

A 2012 study found that those who used paraquat, and who also had a certain genetic variation, were 11 times more likely to develop Parkinson's,

suggesting that certain people could be more at risk from exposure than others.

Given the weight of scientific evidence in relation to paraquat and Parkinson's disease, it's incumbent on the APVMA to urgently review paraquat to protect Australian farmers and their families from the increased risks of developing Parkinson's disease.

Resource: US EPA March 2016, Paraquat Dichloride; Proposed Interim Mitigation Decision, regulations. gov/document?D=EPA-HQ-OPP-2011-0855-0031

POLLINATOR-FRIENDLY FARMING

In an effort to stem the dramatic loss of pollinators in the landscape due to habitat destruction and pesticide use, the US Department of Agriculture and General Mills have committed \$4 million to support the creation and protection of pollinator habitat on American farmlands. The goal is to create pollinator habitat over 100,000 acres by 2021.

Part of the funding will be used to employ six pollinator conservation specialists who will jointly work with the



Monarch butterflies are important pollinators

Xerces Society and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. The specialists will provide consulting services to farmers on habitat restoration and pollinator-friendly farm management practices, including planting native wildflower edges, hedgerows and pollinator meadows on farms.

Pollinator-friendly habitats not only help pollinators survive, they also support beneficial insects that control crop pests, improve water quality and reduce soil erosion.

Xerces Society: xerces.org/pollinator-conservation/

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What's hot

—RIGHT NOW—

PRESENTING SOME STUNNING-LOOKING PLANTS THAT WILL MAKE EXCELLENT ADDITIONS TO YOUR GARDEN AT THIS TIME OF YEAR

PERSIAN ROSES

The plant: If you're looking for a rose that sits comfortably in a mixed border and which mingles beautifully with perennials and other flowering shrubs, then you'll love this new collection of Persian roses, bred in the UK by renowned rose breeder Chris Warner. The roses bloom continuously from spring right through to autumn and tough out our hot summers. Look out for 'For Your Eyes Only' with heavenly scented peachy apricot blooms with golden centres, 'Blue For You' with near-blue semi-double mauve flowers and a sweet violet-like fragrance, 'Berry Delightful' with deep-pink buds that open to reveal a ruffled musk rose with a deep-purple centre and 'Eyes For You'

with magnificent mauve-pink flowers, golden-yellow stamens and vibrant rosehips.

Growing: Persian roses are native to Iran and Afghanistan, so they flourish in our dry summer heat. They thrive in a sunny spot with good drainage, so prepare beds with plenty of compost and organic matter before planting. Feed throughout the growing season to promote masses of blooms.

Design: Persian roses fit neatly into the perennial or flower border, so play around with colour. Team the mauve-pink flowering varieties with other pink, lilac and white flowering perennials or create a splash of long-flowering colour with the more vibrant forms.

diggers.com.au



MELISSA KING

Melissa is a horticulturist, TV presenter and writer. She has been a regular on *Gardening Australia*, *Melbourne Weekender*, *Garden Angels* and *The Circle*. She currently appears on *The Garden Gurus* and has launched an online show, *The Gardenettes*. She has written for top magazines and newspapers and is author of the book, *Garden Feast*.



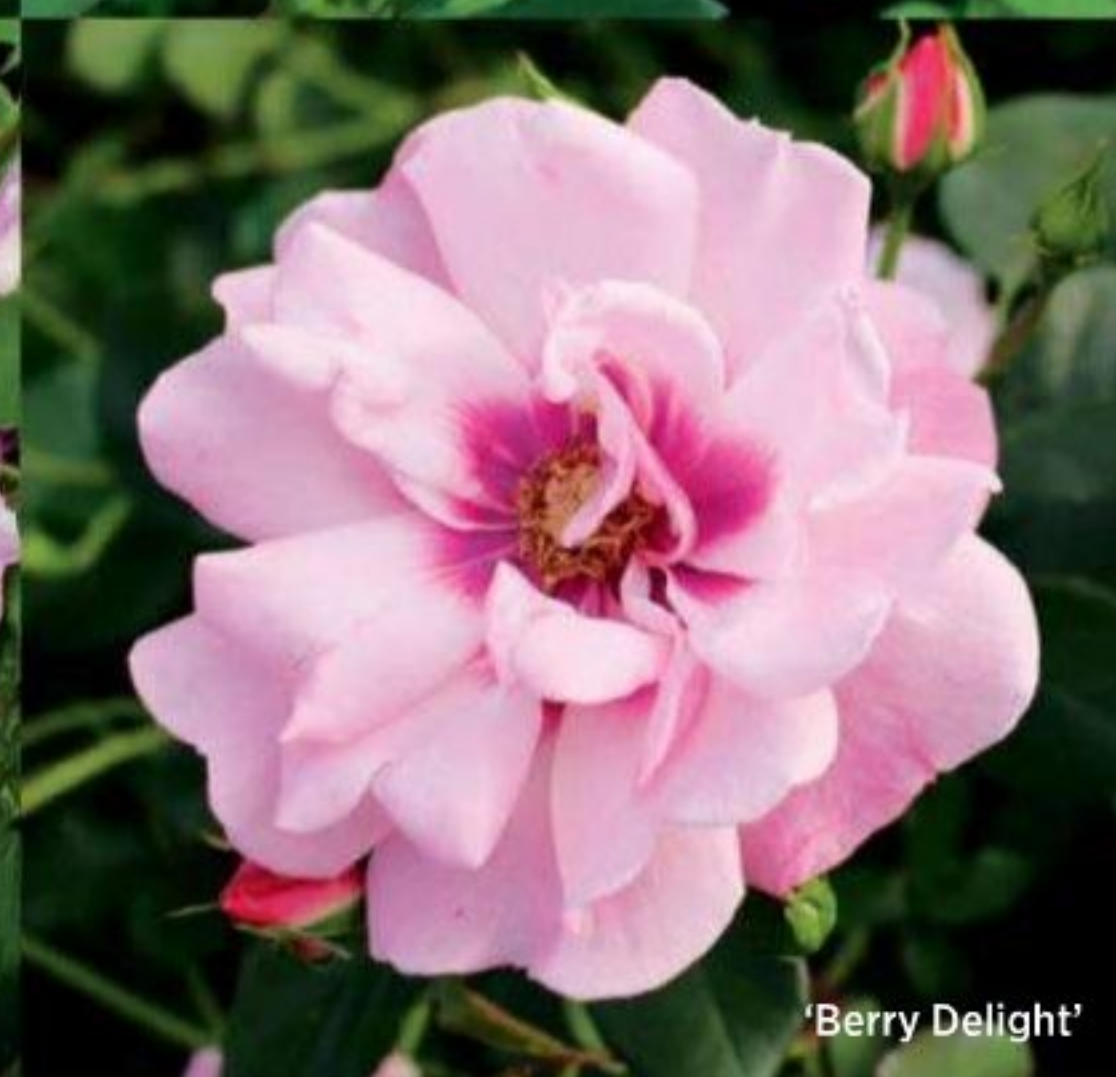
'Eyes For You'



'For Your Eyes Only'



'Blue for You'



'Berry Delight'

LITTLECHUM PLUM × CHERRY

The plant: LittleChum is a plum and cherry cross developed by natural hand pollination, so you get the best of both fruits in one sumptuous little package. It's a match made in heaven! The fruit is small but jam-packed with flavour and deliciously sweet, and the skin is golden-red when ripe. The tree has a lovely upright habit with pretty blossoms mid to late season.

Growing: For a sweet crop of LittleChums, grow trees in a sunny position with good drainage. Dig plenty of compost

and organic matter into the soil before planting, top dress with a good layer of compost and mulch each spring and feed trees with a complete organic fruit food. It fruits better with a cross-pollinating partner. Any plum that flowers mid to late season should do the job.

Design: Make it the star of your backyard orchard or fruit forest. The fruit matures early to mid season and it's very snackable straight from the tree. It's also delicious in puddings and pies.

flemings.com.au

**HEUCHERA 'KEY LIME PIE'**

The plant: Among the shade lovers, heucheras stand out from the crowd with their decorative foliage and year-round appeal. *Heuchera* 'Key Lime Pie' is an absolute ripper with iridescent lime-green foliage that leaps out at you from a shady spot. It's a low-growing plant with a neat clumping habit to around 30cm tall. It also displays small white flowers in late spring and summer.

Growing: Heucheras are remarkably tough, adaptable plants but for best success, grow them in a well-drained organically rich soil. 'Key Lime Pie' flourishes in a semi-shaded spot but it can also tolerate full sun.

Design: Heucheras shine in shady woodland or rock gardens or grow them among perennials and grasses in a flower border. Try growing 'Key Lime Pie' en masse for a carpet of colour, or make it a feature in a decorative pot. I like to grow it with other purple- or burgundy-leaved heucheras for eye-popping contrast.

aussiewinners.com.au

RADISH 'PINK LADY SLIPPER'

The plant: This hot new release features attractive light-pink, oblong-shaped radishes. It's one of the mildest radishes around, with crisp white flesh and glowing, contrasting skin that lights up the salad bowl.

Growing: Radish 'Pink Lady Slipper' is a fast grower, so choose a sunny spot with good drainage and liquid-feed to sustain growth. You can direct-sow the seeds in every season into soil that has been well prepared with compost and organic matter. Thin the developing seedlings to 2.5–5cm apart and keep your crop well watered.

Design: 'Pink Lady Slipper' is quick to harvest, so you'll be pulling up a bumper crop just 25–30 days from sowing. They are best enjoyed raw in salads or as a decorative side dish. If you've got an oversupply, they can be stored in the fridge for up to four weeks without losing their crunch.

diggers.com.au



STIR-FRY STAR

AN ODDBALL IT MAY SEEM BUT CELTUCE, OR WOSUN, AS IT IS KNOWN IN CHINA, IS A POPULAR GREEN VEGETABLE

Words Jennifer Stackhouse

If you are searching for something a little different to grow through the months ahead, celtuce is a clever crop that could fit the bill. It looks like a leafy cos lettuce mounted on a long, thick, fleshy stem.

This vegetable's odd looks have seen it described as a "mutant" lettuce and attracted a host of common names, such as stem lettuce, celery lettuce (the combination of the two words gives the name celtuce) and even asparagus lettuce. It's also called Chinese lettuce and is known in China as *wosun*. It's a very popular Chinese vegetable, too.

Celtuce isn't grown for its green leaves, although these are tasty when the plant is young, but for its edible stem. To get the best from celtuce, harvest the plant when the stem is around 15-20cm long and 3-4cm thick. Older and longer stems may become woody but can be peeled to reveal the tender heart.

Slice and stir-fry so it retains its crisp, crunchy texture. Celtuce can also be served in thin strips like broad pasta ribbons. The leaves can be eaten like lettuce but become bitter as the plant ages.

It has a mild flavour that is usually teamed with stronger flavours, including garlic, ginger and onion. It's full of fibre and high in vitamin C.

PROPAGATION AND GROWING

Celtuce grows easily from seed planted into prepared beds in autumn, or spring in cold zones. Dig in well-rotted manure,

blood and bone or compost before planting to enrich the soil. Seeds are sown about 6mm deep and 30cm apart (thin to this distance if too thickly sown). Seeds germinate quickly and soon resemble small lettuce. Young plants need to be kept moist. Protect from slugs and snails.

Liquid-feed fortnightly with an organic fertiliser to keep celtuce growing strongly. Harvest some of the fresh new leaves but, to use this plant in a stir-fry, allow it to form a thick stem and then harvest the whole plant.

THIS VEGETABLE'S ODD LOOKS HAVE SEEN IT DESCRIBED AS A "MUTANT" LETTUCE AND ATTRACTED A HOST OF COMMON NAMES, SUCH AS STEM LETTUCE, CELERY LETTUCE ... AND EVEN ASPARAGUS LETTUCE.

AVAILABILITY

Although celtuce is a bit of an oddball, it's available from specialist seed suppliers including Diggers Club (diggers.com.au), Eden Seeds (edenseeds.com.au), Green Harvest (greenharvest.com.au) and The Seed Collection (theseedcollection.com.au).

Celtuce label

Common name: Celtuce, stem lettuce, celery lettuce, wosun
Botanical name: *Lactuca sativa* var. *asparagina*
Family: Asteraceae (daisy family)
Requires: Full sun to part shade
Dislikes: Slugs and snails
Suitable for: All areas
Habit: Annual vegetable
Propagation: Seed
Difficulty: Easy



Top The stems are cut thinly for stir-fries and other dishes Above The cooked fleshy stems

SWEET ROOT

VALUED FOR ITS SWEET-TASTING ROOT, LICORICE HAS THERAPEUTIC QUALITIES AND IS AN ATTRACTIVE ADDITION TO THE GARDEN

Words Jennifer Stackhouse

Licorice sticks, licorice allsorts, licorice straps, salty Dutch licorice ... whatever form it comes in, we know it as a black, often-chewy confectionery. But what is licorice?

The back of a packet of chocolate licorice sticks that just happens to be on my desk (research purposes only) lists licorice as the main ingredient, so licorice isn't something that's manufactured. It's a natural product derived from the root of a plant in the pea family. The genus name, *Glycyrrhiza*, from the Greek, literally means sweet (*glykys*) root (*rhiza*).

Licorice is native to various regions, from Spain to China, so it can be grown in a wide range of climates and conditions.

PROPAGATION AND GROWING

Licorice takes up space. It grows 1-1.5m high and spreads via stolons over 3m². It's a plant to grow in its own space. With its leaflets and bluish-grey, pea-shaped flowers, it's pretty as well as useful.

It can be grown from seed sown in spring or summer or planted any time from stolons or root cuttings. The longest roots form in deep, friable soil and provide the best conditions for licorice.

HARVESTING AND USING

It's the root that's used, so it's necessary to harvest the whole plant in autumn before it dies down. Replant pieces to keep the crop growing. Plants form good-sized roots after two to three years' growth. The roots can be 30-

60cm long and about the thickness of a thumb. They are yellow-brown outside and yellow inside. Regularly harvest and replant licorice to avoid the roots becoming too woody.

To use homegrown licorice, the root is sliced into chips and used either fresh or dried. It can be steeped in hot water to make a tea or boiled to produce a sweet black extract. Health benefits include anti-viral, anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory actions, although people with high blood pressure and pregnant women should consume only very moderate amounts of licorice. It has been shown to benefit people with low blood pressure, however.

Said to be 30-50 times sweeter than table sugar, licorice is also used as a sugar-free sweetener and has a long history as a flavouring and additive in medicines, especially cough syrups. It's also an ingredient in Guinness beer.

IT'S THE ROOT THAT'S USED, SO IT'S NECESSARY TO HARVEST THE WHOLE PLANT IN AUTUMN BEFORE IT DIES DOWN.

AVAILABILITY

Licorice is available from specialist herb growers. See Mudbrick Cottage (herbcottage.com.au) and Diggers Club (diggers.com.au).

Licorice label

Common name: Licorice, liquorice, Spanish licorice

Botanical name: *Glycyrrhiza glabra*

Family: Fabaceae (pea family)

Requires: Full sun to part shade; well-drained soil

Dislikes: Poor drainage

Suitable for: All areas

Habit: Herbaceous perennial

Propagation: Seed, stolons (root cuttings)

Difficulty: Easy

Right It's the root that's valued Below Not licorice but known as "licorice plant"



ANOTHER LICORICE

The so-called "licorice plant" isn't licorice at all but a type of shrubby silver-leafed daisy (*Helichrysum petiolare*).

Heaven scent

SPICE UP YOUR GARDEN WITH SOME FAVOURITE PELARGONIUMS, CULTIVATED PURELY FOR THEIR SWEET-SMELLING FOLIAGE

Words & photos Claire Bickle

Many pelargoniums and geraniums are renowned worldwide for their blowsy blooms, but their lesser-known sisters with scented foliage are the true beauties in my eyes.

I recently heard someone declare geraniums/pelargoniums to be unsophisticated plants, but I beg to differ. Any plant with scent as part of its package, whether via bloom or foliage, is a winner in my book. And plants that can take the heat and still look fabulous are great for those locations where rainfall is

scarce and summer temperatures soar.

With the newfound recognition of the therapeutic benefits of gardening, I believe scented plants play a huge role in the many beneficial aspects of gardening. The flowers of scented pelargoniums are generally quite small, but when the foliage is bruised, it's fantastically aromatic.

The range of scented pelargoniums is quite amazing, too, with some 219 species originating in South Africa and a further 50-odd found in Australia, New Zealand and East Africa. True geranium species, on the other hand, originate in North America and Europe.

CULTIVATION

These evergreen perennials share many characteristics with the geraniums most of us know. They can range in height from 30cm to 100cm and vary greatly in their leaf shape and colour. They may be crinkled, furry, variegated and so forth, depending on variety.

Scented pelargoniums are easy to grow in a wide range of climate zones, with the possible exception of the tropics. For best results, choose a sunny location with free-draining soil and good airflow around the plants. They prefer to dry out a little between watering.

Be mindful of your watering technique

in humid subtropical locations. Avoid wetting the foliage and take into account the summer rainfall that has occurred. They detest wet feet, which can occur in heavy clay. If drainage is an issue, apply a liquid gypsum, organic matter and sand or consider planting in a mound to raise the roots.

Of course, pots and containers are always a great option, as you can easily control drainage issues and move the plants when weather conditions are unfavourable.

In cold areas where frosts are common, some species will only last as annuals, but they may just die down and come

back when the warm weather returns.

Feed your pelargoniums with an organic fertiliser such as blood and bone or pelletised manure, while applications of silica and potash will encourage strong cells and good flowering. Seaweed applications are also beneficial for health and hardiness and will improve your soil at the same time.

POSSIBLE PROBLEMS

Apply an organic fungicide such as eco-fungicide. Increase airflow around the plant and try not to wet foliage.

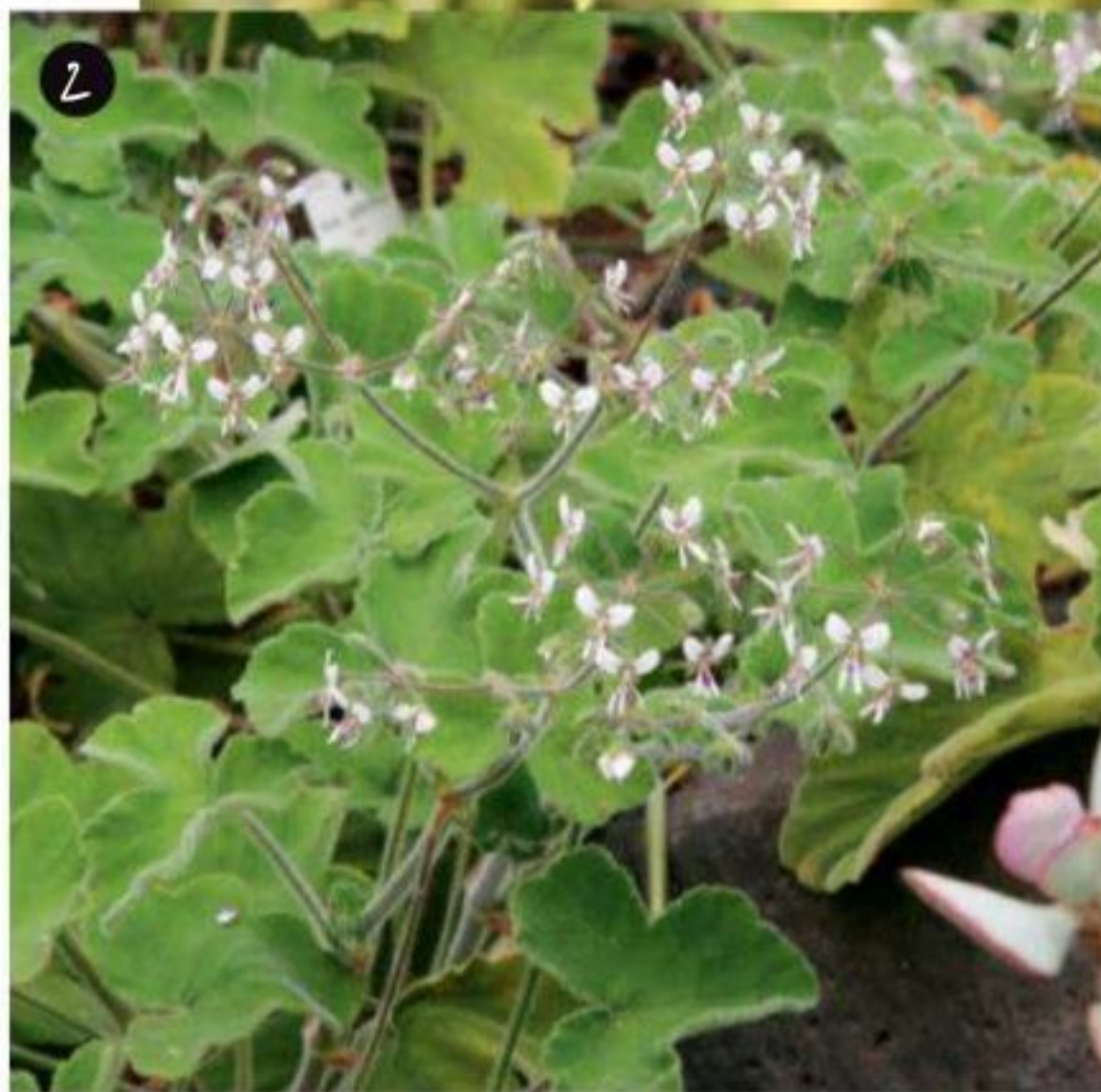
Rotting: Improve drainage with liquid gypsum and reduce watering.

Caterpillars: Opt for an organic pest control option such *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) spray or pyrethrum.

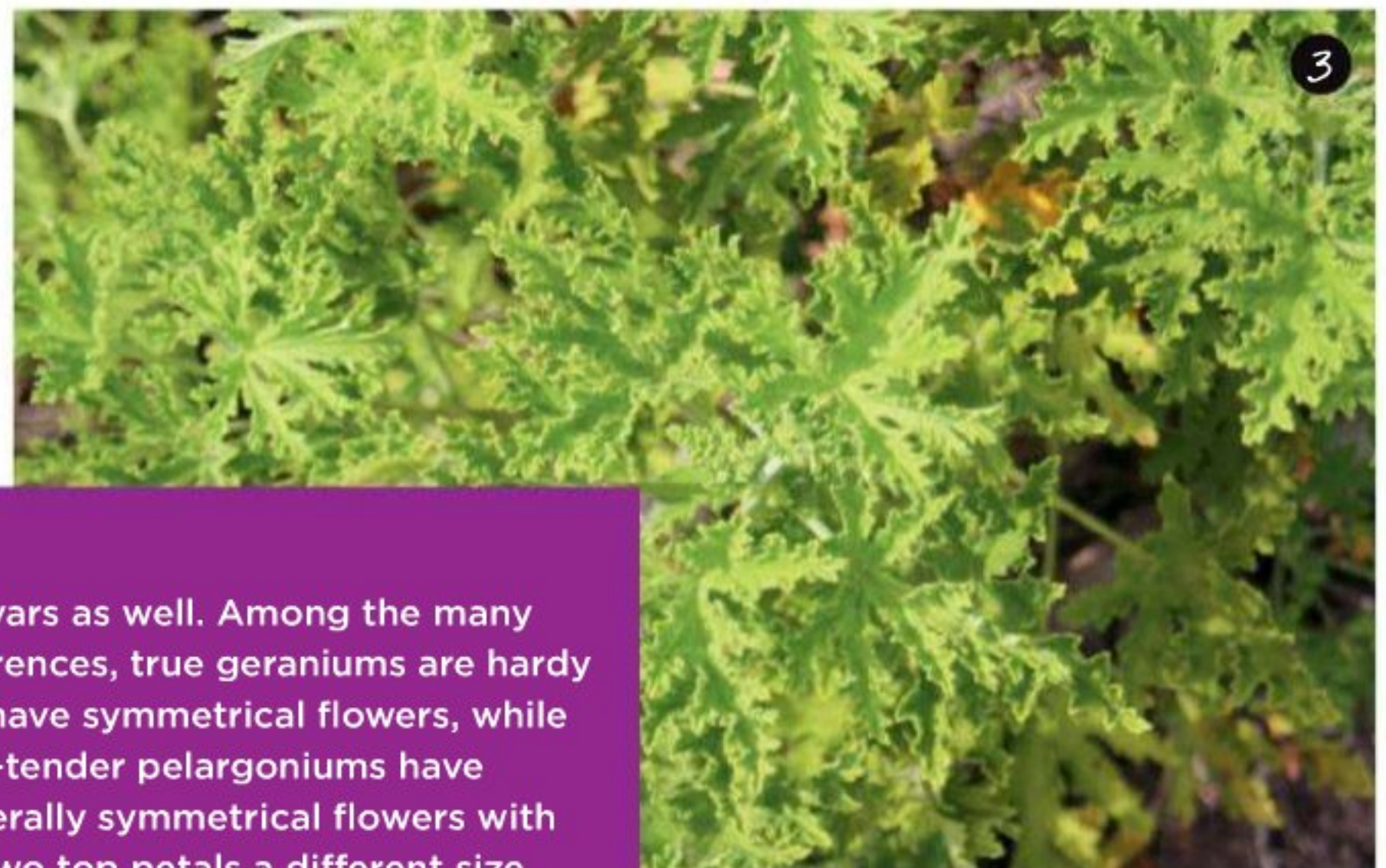
PROPAGATING

Happily, most pelargoniums and geraniums are easily propagated from cuttings, even by the brownest of thumbs. Just use a propagating mix that has a reasonable amount of sharp sand in it so the cuttings have good drainage and don't rot. ➡➡

WHILE THE FLOWERS OF SCENTED PELARGONIUMS ARE GENERALLY QUITE SMALL, WHEN THE FOLIAGE IS BRUISED, IT'S FANTASTICALLY AROMATIC.



1 'Scarlet Pet' 2 *Pelargonium tomentosum* 3 'Citrosa' Mozzie blocker Opposite page *Pelargonium graveolens*



PELARGONIUMS AND GERANIUMS

Pelargonium is one of five genera within the family Geraniaceae, which has more than 800 species. This family includes the separate genus *Geranium*. However, the common name "geranium" is often used for many pelargonium species and

cultivars as well. Among the many differences, true geraniums are hardy and have symmetrical flowers, while frost-tender pelargoniums have bilaterally symmetrical flowers with the two top petals a different size from the rest.

PLANT PROFILE | PELARGONIUMS

SOME POPULAR SCENTED PELARGONIUMS

PLANT	SCENT	DESCRIPTION
<i>P. tomentosum</i> 'Chocolate Peppermint'	Peppermint	Spreading, rambling habit, dark-green leaves with dark-purple markings. 40cm × 100cm
<i>P. tomentosum</i> 'Peppermint Geranium'	Peppermint	Green, soft, furry almost heart-shaped leaves. To 1m
<i>P. citronellum</i>	Citronella	Sometimes called 'Mozzie Blocker' due to its claimed mosquito-repelling qualities. Pale-pink flowers. 50cm × 50cm
<i>P. graveolens</i>	Rose	A spreading plant with vibrant green leaves and pale-pink flowers. 40cm × 60cm
<i>P. capitatum</i> 'Attar of Roses'	Turkish delight	Compact bush with grey-green furry foliage and mauve/pink flowers. 40cm × 40cm
<i>P. radans</i> 'Skeleton Rose'	Rose	A fine ferny foliated plant with pale-pink flowers. 50cm × 50cm
<i>P. odoratissimum</i>	Apple	Smaller growing with small, soft, grey-green foliage and tiny white flowers. To 30cm
'Pine Fern Leaf' <i>P. denticulatum</i> 'Filicifolium'	Pine	Fine, dark-green, sticky ferny foliage with mauve flowers. 50cm × 60cm
'Old Spice' <i>P. filicifolium</i>	Pine	Large oak-leaf shaped, sticky foliage often with dark marking in the centre, mauve flowers. 50cm × 60cm
<i>P. fragrans</i>	Nutmeg/ cinnamon	Small, grey-green, soft foliage and tiny white flowers. To 30cm
<i>P. grossularioides</i>	Coconut	A small groundcover with small, round, shiny dark-green foliage and minute cerise flowers. 20cm × 30cm
'Cinnamon' <i>P. limoneum</i>	Cinnamon	Small crinkled leaves and bright-pink flowers. 60cm × 30cm.
'Mint Scented Rose' <i>P. spp.</i>	Peppermint	Variegated ferny foliage with mauve flowers. 50cm × 50cm
<i>P. × nervosum</i>	Lime	Small upright bush with crinkled small leaves and white flowers. To 40cm
'Lemon Balm' <i>P. × melissinum</i>	Lemon	Spreading bush with beautiful vibrant-green foliage and mauve flowers. Good insect repellent. 50cm × 1m
<i>P. crispum</i> & <i>crispum variegata</i>	Lemon	Bushy plant and good insect repellent. Variegated form available. 50cm × 1m
<i>P. × citronellum</i> 'Mabel Grey'	Lemon	Strongest smelling of all lemon-scented types, with green, bristly leaves and bright-pink flowers. 60cm × 100cm
'Orange' <i>P. × citrosum</i>	Orange	An upright plant with small crinkled foliage and purple-streaked flowers. To 40cm
<i>P. × torencia</i>	Ginger	Upright bush with smooth foliage that has slightly toothed edges. Showy lavender-coloured flowers with deep purple markings. 60cm × 50cm.
'Village Hill Oak' <i>Pelargonium</i>	Deep woods/oak	The dark-green foliage has a chocolate-coloured mid-rib in the centre of the leaf. Pink flowers with deep-purple markings. 60cm × 60cm
'Candy Dancer' <i>P. denticulatum</i>	Rose/lemon	Fine ferny foliage, beautiful large pale-pink flowers. 60cm × 60cm
'Scarlet Pet' <i>P. spp.</i>	Carrot	Sprawling plant with vibrant scarlet flowers. One of the oldest scented geraniums and a favourite among gardeners. 50cm × 1m

Note: Some will be larger or smaller in their growth habit depending on climate, soil type and cultural conditions.



1 Mabel Grey flower
2 Peppermint-scented
3 *Pelargonium crispum*
4 Candy Dancer

USING SCENTED PELARGONIUMS

Scented pelargoniums are grown for their essential oils, which are used widely in cosmetics, for medicinal purposes, as culinary options, for their insect-repellent properties and in aromatherapy. The dried leaves and flowers are often used to make pot-pourri.

CAKES AND BISCUITS

Peppermint geranium & chocolate

cake: Place slightly crushed peppermint geranium leaves in the bottom of the cake tin and pour your favourite cake mix over the top. Once cooked, remove the leaves. Rose geraniums can be used with a standard butter cake mix.

Rose geranium biscuits: Use leaves dried and ground in the batter mix or place fresh leaves on the oven tray so the scent infuses the biscuits.

SWEET VINEGARS

Lemon- and rose-scented geranium leaves go well with lemon basil, mints and lemon verbena to make sweet

vinegar. Just place your chosen mix of foliage in a decorative glass bottle and fill with white wine vinegar.

DRINKS

Pelargonium flowers and foliage can be added to punches, teas, lemonade and sorbets. Which you use is up to you, so experiment. They can also be frozen in ice-cube trays and you can use the flowers as floral garnishes.

DESSERTS

For jelly, add a few scented leaves to a standard apple jelly recipe. For flavouring, sweetening and scenting a range of desserts, favourites are rose, lemon and peppermint.

SCENTED SUGAR

Cover layers of leaves with a scoop or two of sugar and repeat until the jar is full. Close the jar and leave on a sunny windowsill for a couple of weeks. Sift out the leaves. Your sugar will be infused with the plant perfume.

POT-POURRI

Gather a range of rose petals, lavender and scented leaves of your choice.

Place leaves, petals and flowers on a cooling rack, ensuring they're not touching. Place in a dark, warm location to dry; alternatively, place the rack in the oven on a low heat. Once dry, place in muslin bags with other chosen ingredients, or in a bowl or diffuser.

It's not compulsory to have a fixative in your pot-pourri, but the addition of a fixative means it won't lose its fragrance too quickly. Commonly used fixatives are orris root, oak moss, calamus root and fiber fix.

Oils of lavender, geranium or citrus can be used to increase fragrance.

INSECT REPELLENT

The various lemon and citrosa pelargoniums are the most effective in repelling biting insects. Plant or place pots in your outdoor entertaining area. The plants will need to be brushed up against to release the insect-repelling oils. Alternatively, harvest a big bunch, chop roughly and place around the entertaining area or rub on skin. 🐛

PURPLE PASSION

A COUSIN TO THE PASSIONFRUIT VINE, *PASSIFLORA INCARNATA* IS GROWN MORE FOR ITS ORNAMENTAL FLOWERS AND MEDICINAL QUALITIES OF ITS LEAVES THAN FOR ITS FRUIT

Words Kerry Boyne

Of the 500-odd members of its sprawling genus, *Passiflora incarnata* is among the hardiest, undoubtedly one of the prettiest and, to top it off, possesses significant medicinal powers. Also known as maypop, this is the *Passiflora* we are referring to when we talk about the herb passionflower.

Despite the name, this plant has nothing to do with arousing passion — quite the opposite, really. Passionflowers have religious associations with the suffering, also known as “the passion”, of Christ. Various parts of the flower represent aspects of the crucifixion, including the 10 disciples present (petals and sepals), the nails on the cross (stigma), Christ’s five wounds (anthers) and his crown of thorns (fringes).

Interestingly, *Passiflora incarnata* is the herb prescribed (and sold) to all the

pilgrims who visit the so-called medium and “psychic surgeon”, John of God, or João de Deus, a Brazilian farmer who allegedly channels “entities” and God to heal the sick.

Native to southern USA, Central and South America, the deciduous creeping vine, which grows to several metres, has a very long history of therapeutic use. The Spanish conquistadors learned about it from the Aztecs, who used it for anxiety and insomnia.

THERAPEUTIC BENEFITS

Religious associations aside, a small amount of scientific studies somewhat confirm the efficacy of the plant for its traditional uses. Some research found it as effective as benzodiazepine drugs (minor tranquilisers such as Valium), while other studies have shown it may have a calming effect before a medical or dental procedure (who doesn’t need that!?).

Passionflower label

Common name: Passionflower, maypop

Botanical name: *Passiflora incarnata*

Family: Passifloraceae

Likes: Sun, well-drained soil

Dislikes: Being too wet

Suitable for: Tropics, subtropics, temperate, Mediterranean

Habit: Perennial vine

Propagation: Seed, cutting, grafting

Difficulty: Easy

A 2013 study combining it with valerian and hops found the combination to be helpful for insomnia. Passionflower tea has also been found to improve quality of sleep. Other studies have looked at it as an aid in withdrawal from alcohol, opiate and cannabis dependence.

It's the flavonoids chrysin and apigenin in passionflower that are thought to be responsible for its sedative, anti-anxiety and anti-spasmodic actions. The scientific evidence, some from animal studies, for its therapeutic usefulness can only be described as preliminary, but results accord well with its traditional reputation and use by both indigenous people in tropical America and by Europeans.

Other therapeutic applications include using it for upset stomach, irregular heart rate, high blood pressure, burns and haemorrhoids. It's even said to help menopausal discomfort.

SIDE-EFFECTS/INTERACTIONS

Passionflower is considered safe but hypersensitivity reactions have been reported, as have dizziness and confusion in people who have really overdone it (4-8g should be the maximum daily dose). It can also interact with some drugs and should not be taken with pharmaceutical sedatives to avoid excessive sleepiness. Don't take it in pregnancy and, as with using any therapeutic herb, discuss with your healthcare practitioner.

GROWING

As this pretty vine goes dormant in winter, it's probably best to plant it in the ground during the warmer months, but if planting in a pot — possibly a good idea as it can become invasive by suckering — now or any time is OK. Start from seed or cuttings and water regularly and consistently while it's being established.

As the hardiest of passionflowers, it can survive very low winter temperatures (will die back below freezing then come back when temperatures rise again) and drought at the other end of the scale. It's not too fussy about soil, though it will do well in rich, well-drained soil in a sunny or semi-shaded position.

If you are interested in the fruit, which is edible, by the way, it will need a pollinator nearby — the same plant or another *Passiflora*, such as a passionfruit vine (*Passiflora edulis*).

You will be rewarded with an abundance of these beautiful flowers through summer and autumn as well as plenty of butterflies. They love this plant!

USING PASSIONFLOWER

For medicinal purposes, the dried leaves are used as a calming tea. It's also sold as a supplement, both on its own and in combination with other calming herbs. The fruit is actually edible, though perhaps not quite as enjoyable or popular as its cousin *Passiflora edulis*, though it's still tasty with an apricot-like flavour. It's used in beverages, jams and jellies. 🍷

HARVESTING PASSIONFLOWER

- Cut stems with leaves on and tie into bundles with string, as you would do for drying culinary herbs. It's OK to leave flowers on if there are any.
- Hang the bundles in a warm, dry spot such as a sunny window for a couple of weeks until the plant material becomes brittle.
- Crush the dried plant material and place in a jar or container with a lid, preferably glass.



PASSIONFLOWERS HAVE RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATIONS WITH THE SUFFERING, ALSO KNOWN AS "THE PASSION", OF CHRIST.



1 A long history of therapeutic use 2 Dry the leaves for their calming effect 3 Make the leaves into a tea to take at bedtime

PASSIONFLOWER TEA

- Add a cup of boiling water to a teaspoon of crushed leaves and let steep for around 10 minutes.
- Drink half an hour before going to bed.
- Variations: Add lemon balm or chamomile to the passionflower to enhance the calming effect. Add lemon and honey for taste.



Little beauties

DON'T HAVE THE ROOM TO GROW FRUIT TREES? FORGET ABOUT MOVING HOUSE AND INSTEAD CONSIDER THESE VERY PRODUCTIVE DWARF VARIETIES

Words Melissa King

Photos Fleming's Nurseries

If you think home orchards are only for big backyards, think again. Virtually any fruit that comes to mind, from sumptuous cherries to crisp, crunchy apples, are now available in mini form, so there's a whole fruit salad of dwarf varieties you can grow and harvest. Pint-sized fruit trees can be grown in big pots or a cosy corner of the garden and, despite their diminutive size, often produce a full-size crop of tasty fruit.

Most varieties thrive in a sunny spot with rich well-drained soil or you could create a miniature orchard on your patio or balcony with big decorative pots. Look for pots with a depth and diameter of at least 50-60cm and be sure to use a good-quality potting mix. Liquid-feed potted fruit trees every fortnight to sustain growth and promote a bumper crop of flowers and fruit.

STONE FRUIT

I'm a long-time fan of Nectarine 'Nectarzee', which grows to just 1.5m tall, with a bountiful crop of yellow-fleshed nectarines. Peach 'Pixzee' is another compact choice with a delicious crop of full-sized, golden-fleshed peaches. Both varieties also boast a pretty show of spring blossoms and can make a beautiful feature in decorative pots on a patio or balcony.

If you fancy harvesting bowls full of sweet, juicy cherries from a compact tree, look out for the miniature Cherry 'Black Cherree', which grows to around 2.5m tall with a display of sweet, heart-shaped cherries that you'll want to devour straight from the tree. Or, for something novel and a bit different, try growing Cherry 'White Cherree' with sweet, firm, white-fleshed cherries blushed with the slightest touch of red.



1 Nectarine 'Trixxie Nectazee' 2 'Trixxie Black Cherree' fruit
3 Peach 'Trixxie Pixzee' 4 'Trixxie White Cherree' fruit

HOME ORCHARD | DWARF VARIETIES

**POME FRUIT**

You'll also love Pear 'Pyvert'. This pint-sized tree produces large, sweet, green-skinned fruit perfect for making poached pears with ice-cream or luscious pear and ginger cake.

If you're looking to fill a difficult narrow area or skinny garden bed, then look out for columnar fruit tree varieties, which grow tall and thin, such as the Ballerina range of apples. You'll find five dessert apples and one crab apple in the range and all boast a good crop of fruit and pretty pink or white blossoms.

CITRUS

Dwarf citrus trees boast glossy evergreen foliage, sweetly scented blossoms and an abundance of fruit, all on a space-saving tree. As the name suggests,

'Lots a Lemons' produces a bountiful crop of full-size Meyer lemons on a mini tree, which grows to just 1.5m tall. It crops so well that you'll be making and baking lemon meringue pie all year long. 'Lemonicious' is another dwarf form of the Meyer lemon that fruits its socks off with small, scented, white flowers and a hefty crop of golden fruit that light up a courtyard or balcony. Lime 'Sublime' is another beauty that fits nicely into a tight spot. It produces a zesty crop of full-sized Tahitian limes (the perfect choice for a gin and tonic) on a tree just 1.5m tall.

If you're after something novel and productive that saves on space, you'll also love double-grafted Citrus Splitsers. They come in all sorts of combinations such as lemon and lime or orange and lime, so you get two varieties on the one tree.

OLIVES

Bring a touch of Mediterranean flair to your courtyard or balcony with *Olea* 'Garden Harvest'. This small olive tree can grow up to 2m tall but can be kept shorter with regular clipping and makes a decorative feature in a big pot. It produces plump, medium-sized olives that taste sumptuous cured or made into oil.

SPACE SAVERS

PLANT A DUO OR TRIO

For gardeners in the know, or who want to try something different, planting a duo or trio of fruit trees is an age-old practice for saving space, extending harvest time, increasing the variety of fruit and providing for cross-pollination. Simply plant two or three trees from the same genus in the one hole, spacing them about 150mm apart, side by side for a duo and in a triangle shape for a trio. Then remove any branches that cross in the middle so the trees fit snugly

together. Peaches, nectarines, plums, cherries, apricots, apples, almonds and pears work particularly well when grown using this technique.

ESPALIER

Create a work of art and save space in the garden by espaliering your fruit trees. Espalier is the practice of training a tree or shrub to grow flat against a fence or wall. It's an ancient technique that has equal appeal in a modern garden for saving space and dressing up a dull wall or fence.

You can create beautiful patterns, from simple U-shapes to complex candelabra designs, fan patterns, diamond designs and everything in-between. However, if you are new to the art of espalier, you might like to start with a basic pattern such as a simple horizontal design.

In the Middle Ages, fruit trees were espaliered on castle courtyard walls so the trees would provide fruit without encroaching too much on the space.

Almost any fruit tree can be espaliered but some work particularly well. Apples, pears and plums have nice flexible wood, which can be easily trained into intricate patterns. Cherries, peaches, nectarines, quinces and almonds create beautiful, simple designs. Or bring a Mediterranean feel to your garden with espaliered citrus or olives.

MULTI-GRAFTING

If space is limited, look for multi-grafts with two or more varieties on the one tree. Compatible varieties for cross-pollination are often grafted onto the one plant, so it's a great way to grow fruit such as apples and pears without the need for two trees. Or you might just want to increase the variety of fruit you can grow in your small patch. You can learn to graft yourself or get your hands on Fruit Salad trees with up to six different fruits on the same tree. Look out for stone fruit, citrus or apple/pear (pome) combinations.

More information, www.flemings.com.au

PINT-SIZED FRUIT TREES CAN BE GROWN IN BIG POTS OR A COSY CORNER OF THE GARDEN AND, DESPITE THEIR DIMINUTIVE SIZE, OFTEN PRODUCE A FULL-SIZE CROP OF TASTY FRUIT.

1 'Trixie Pyvert' pear fruit 2 'Trixie Pyvert' pear in flower
3 'Gala Trixie' 4 Flowering of a dwarf apple 5 Fruit Salad Tree
6 Citrus and olives are great for espaliering 7 Citrus Splitter





This top area had terrible soil, which Kyrstie worked very hard to correct



THE HILLS ARE ALIVE

IT TOOK A LOT OF WORK BUT THIS STEEP SUBURBAN BLOCK NOW BLOOMS WITH A VIEW

Words & photos Jana Holmer

No matter how much they love their gardens, not many gardeners get to turn their passion into a career. In Kyrstie Barcak's case, her life and that of her family are centred on her vegie patch.

For her, the gardening bug initially bloomed with the birth of the first of her two sons. That made her keen to create a sustainable lifestyle for her little family and for her son to have the opportunity to eat the freshest, healthiest food possible.

"It also provided an opportunity to spend time together outdoors, talking, learning and caring for our home environment," Kyrstie says.

Now she provides what she calls "a complete vegetable garden set-up and discovery session for preschools". And for the past five years, she's been writing about her garden on her blog, *A Fresh Legacy*.

She has also published her first book, *Grow Just One Thing: The First Step in a Fresh Food Journey*, and launched the Kitchen Garden Box, a gardening kit designed to help families begin their own vegetable gardens. ➡➡

A GROWING CONCERN

When Kyrstie and partner Douglas first moved to Highton, a leafy, hilly suburb about 10 minutes from the centre of Geelong, Victoria, the property held little promise. "There was a lemon and a feijoa tree but that was it," she recalls.

The sloping quarter-acre block had poor soil with few nutrients but plenty of small stones. Kyrstie spent weeks digging and sifting out the rocks, then filled the area with compost, manure and straw before she could plant.

After several years of back-breaking work, the result is a beautiful productive space that has taught her a lot about gardening and food in general. Her sons

know how to grow fresh food, enjoy eating the food from the garden and have grown up helping her plant and care for it each season.

"The property allows us to live the country lifestyle on the outskirts of Geelong's city centre," she says. "It gives you the illusion you're living in the country."

While it was primarily her children who inspired her gardening, Kyrstie recalls her Czech grandmother had a green thumb and a large vegetable garden. Her other

nan also grew many vegetables and some fruit in her yard, and both kept chooks. Kyrstie had hens herself for a while but gave them away as they kept eating the garden. But she aims to have beehives one day — another family tradition.

Kyrstie has never had any major pest issues that she felt required more than basic preventive measures. If something's attacked badly, she simply removes the plant and tests the preventive measure the following



THE SLOPING QUARTER-ACRE BLOCK HAD POOR SOIL WITH FEW NUTRIENTS BUT PLENTY OF SMALL STONES. KYRSTIE SPENT WEEKS DIGGING AND SIFTING OUT THE ROCKS, THEN FILLED THE AREA WITH COMPOST, MANURE AND STRAW BEFORE SHE COULD PLANT.

KYRSTIE'S TOP 5 TIPS

- 1 Involve your children in gardening. It's a dynamic learning environment that provides benefits for the whole family.
- 2 Start out small; grow just one thing. Experience some success and then grow more.
- 3 Plant your vegies and/or herbs somewhere they are easy for you to grab as you're then more likely to use and enjoy them in your family meals.
- 4 Grow food your family likes to eat and that you buy often, such as lettuce or herbs. This helps reduce your reliance on stores and encourages you to expand and grow more.
- 5 Never throw out eggshells or coffee grounds — they're great for the garden.



year. She enjoys testing various natural methods of pest control to see what works as it then helps her readers who experience issues in their own gardens. As examples, she has experimented with eggshells, coffee grounds and cloches made from old containers.

"Companion planting is the key to minimising pests," Kyrstie says. "I use chilli-garlic spray and also tried getting rid of slugs and slaters using orange peels. Generally, the kids help keep a lookout

for obvious things such as snails."

There's always plenty growing in the garden so she's not too fussed if she loses a plant here and there to pests. There's a heap of manure available from nearby properties and Kyrstie composts all their food scraps as well as paper and ash from the fire. She sometimes uses blood and bone and eco-seaweed, too.

This gardener also practises crop rotation and last winter trialled an exclusion zone in one area of the garden

using netting, which worked beautifully.

On the to-do list are a worm farm, a tank to harvest rainwater and, hopefully, a glasshouse her husband will build using old windows her dad has on hand.

THE FRUITS OF HER LABOUR

The garden is essentially four raised beds with plants growing in between the beds — pumpkins grown vertically on structures, for example. Kyrstie also uses a medium-sized Vegepod (a self-watering garden with a lid for protection against pests and extreme weather) for seedlings and to trial the planting she does with preschools.

"Ninety-eight per cent of my vegetables are grown from seed," she says. The most prolific are her tomatoes, while her parsley "grows to the size of a huge bush".

This year, for the first time, Kyrstie plans to plant ginger, turmeric and cumin in the boys' old sandpit. She laughs, "The kids don't mind vegetables growing there as long as I don't bury any of their diecast Matchbox cars."

As far as using the produce goes, she says, "Tomato passata is always a highlight each year and the kids also love my tomato sauce." Kyrstie also likes to dehydrate and store seasonal fruit throughout the year, such as tomatoes, apples and berries, as well as make sauces, jams and spreads to fill the pantry for the year.

Kyrstie's enthusiasm for cooking has also paid off. Over the past four years, she has developed recipes for some leading Australian food brands, including Kambrook, Pureharvest, Tassal Tasmanian Salmon, Dairy Farmers and Australian Mushroom Growers. A recipe concept she developed for La Zuppa soups is now on supermarket shelves; she even won a trip to a cooking school in Italy for herself and Douglas.

The talented gardener also makes her own lavender soap, uses lemons in a body scrub and sage in a body moisturiser. She planted a variety of mint with plans of making tea but ended up just adding it to summer drinks instead.

When not gardening or cooking, Kyrstie likes to do a little knitting during winter but says she's terrible at it. She really only does it to take a break from writing. And gardening. And cooking. 

Connect with Kyrstie on her website, **afreshlegacy.net**, or on Facebook at A Fresh Legacy.

1 Growing from seed 2 Plenty of borage ensures bees 3 Raised beds make growing on a slope easier 4 The Vegepod has a lid for protection 5 Insect hotel 6 Kyrstie uses a chilli-garlic spray for pests on vegies



WHAT KYRSTIE GROWS

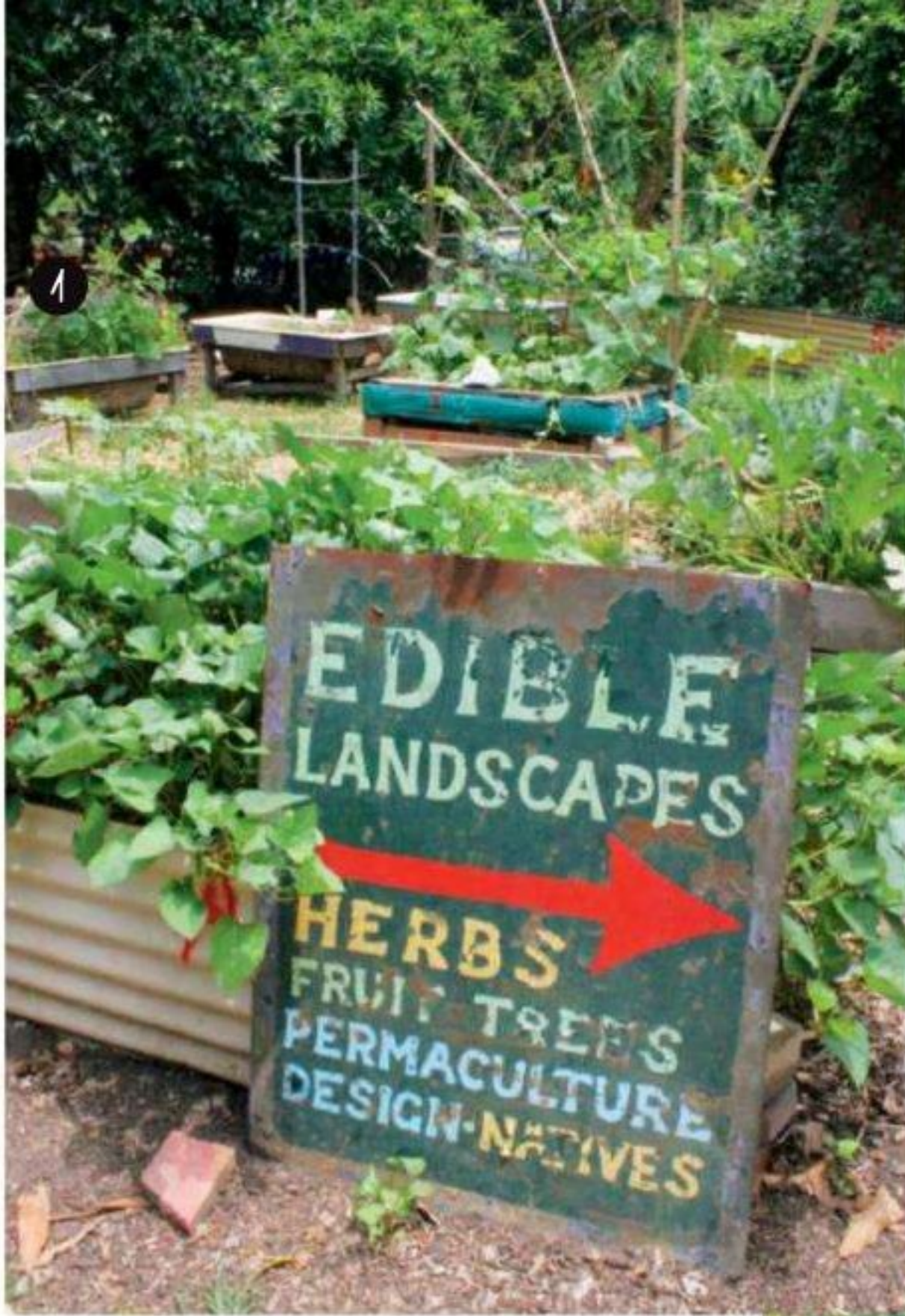
The list is impressive: lettuce, rocket, spinach, rhubarb, chives, spring onions, peas, beans, radicchio, bok choy, blueberries, radish, fennel, beetroot, carrots, strawberries, garlic and onions. There are eggplant and capsicum that last through winter as well as cabbage, broccoli and kale. Pumpkin, potatoes, tomatoes, cucumber, zucchini, capsicum, chilli and basil grow through summer.

To attract bees and other beneficial insects, Kyrstie plants borage, zinnia, marigold, alyssum, dahlias, nasturtiums, cornflowers and dill. She also keeps planting new fruit trees, which so far include an avocado she grew from seed, a macadamia that's just beginning to fruit, a pomegranate and finger lime, plus the usual fruits (peach, apple, apricot, orange and lemon). Not to mention three olive trees.

GARDEN CITY

SUBTROPICAL BRISBANE IS NEVER SHORT OF
GREENERY BUT THIS INNER-CITY PEOPLE'S
ORGANIC FARM IS SOMETHING DIFFERENT





Words & photos Sandra Tuszynska

Nestled in the heart of Brisbane in the inner-northern suburb of Windsor is the Northey Street City Farm (NSCF), an inspirational community project that began in 1994.

Now occupying 2.5 acres, the NSCF's original smaller parcel of land was initially leased from the council by some folk from Red Hill who wanted to set up a community garden to grow organic food according to the principles of permaculture.

Their aims were to prove it's not only possible but also quite easy to grow organic food in the city and to provide the skills and knowledge needed to garden organically and locally.

The original site was a grass-covered piece of swampy wasteland with concrete rubble, bricks and bottles dumped here and there. With no access to power, water or other amenities, a group of passionate people chipped away at the hard, compacted soil with persistence and dedication as this barren wilderness slowly blossomed into a city farm.

SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION

Veronica "Ronni" Martin, the NSCF's education and support team manager, began a permaculture design course in 1984. Now she organises educational programs and promotions for the NSCF as well as managing the administration and finance staff.

1 Northey Street Farm aims to educate about sustainable living and permaculture 2 Permaculture banana circle 3 Something for everyone of all ages *Opposite page Ronni Martin, team manager*

With a background in design, Ronni is focused on actively resolving social issues in current world settings. "I've always wanted to build a better world through creative solutions," she says. "There's no use complaining about the state the world is in. I believe that each of us can make a difference by taking personal action.

"I've always loved plants and design, so permaculture is an ideal combination of my interests. It connects people through a social and food-growing engagement. It's not just about growing vegies or gardening; it's about making connections between people [and] empowering our role in creating sustainable systems and practices," says Ronni.

"The aim of NSCF is education about sustainable living and permaculture with a focus on urban initiative — to use the site to demonstrate permaculture

techniques that people can use at home. Our workshops encourage sustainable living practices, to give people the skills to do more for themselves."

NSCF's workshops not only focus on food growing but include cheese making, crafts, natural printing using plant dyes, beekeeping and composting. The education program brings in hundreds of schoolchildren and workshop participants per year. Additionally, NSCF aims to create employment opportunities for people.

"We have 15 part-time employees and 40 volunteers, including those on the Work for the Dole program, participating in and learning mainly through farming and construction activities," Ronni says.

The Northey Street Sunday Organic Farmers Market, with 70 stalls providing organic produce from growers all over south-east Queensland, attracts around 50,000 people each year. ➡➡



1 The nursery provides a variety of plants to the public 2 Insect hotel 3 Sawfly larvae hatchery (for the chickens) 4 Ko in a composting bay

THE CHALLENGES

The NSCF's proximity to tidal Breakfast Creek, a catchment for Mounts Coot-tha and Nebo, makes it prone to flooding during heavy rains. In fact, the 1974 flood wiped out the dwellings that once occupied the site.

Floods occur, on average, every second year with the potential of a 1.5m water rise, especially during the storm season and full moon. As a result, the farm must adhere to a flood management plan, including flood monitoring and flood watch shifts, as well as having tools and equipment storage procedures in place.

Despite this apparent abundance of water, Ronni explains the rainfall is unreliable. "While our beds are watered

by automated drip irrigation, in dry times, we do need to manually supply water to the plants. We have water tanks collecting rainwater from roofs and we're connected to the mains as well."

Most of the farm's produce is grown in raised beds in purchased soil mix dressed with compost made on-site. The reason is that the pre-existing housing development and industries left a legacy of lead contamination, mainly from house paints. While the contamination is restricted to just a few patches, it creates a challenge for NSCF's eager members in growing organic food.

The farm monitors and reports on the lead levels in the soil. Only some food crops, such as pumpkins, actually accumulate heavy metals, while fruit

trees can safely be grown on the farm as they don't take up lead into their fruits.

As in any non-government organisation, money's always tight. "We are a self-funded organisation using the nursery, the Northey Street Market as well as workshops to generate income, which allows us to sustain the initiative," Ronni elaborates. "We also apply for grants, which allow us to maintain and expand infrastructure. We have a lot of maintenance to keep up with and the farm would not survive without its volunteers."

GROWING FOOD FOR BRISBANE

As Ronni says, "To make gardening easy, always grow plants that do well in a specific season and climate." Brisbane's hot, humid summers and unreliable rainfall dictate three gardening seasons. Summer tends to be fallow yet the season is still productive for plants such as snake beans, ginger and turmeric, cucumber, watermelons and cherry tomatoes.

Spring provides perfect conditions for Mediterranean foods such as eggplants and capsicums, while the mild winter is suitable for European vegies such as cabbages. In total, the farm has more than a thousand crop varieties, including rare plants such as tamarind, ice-cream bean, cassava and turmeric.

The central kitchen garden provides a great space for creating garden-fresh lunches three days a week for the volunteers as well as operating as a weekend cafe. Importantly, the NSCF, through allotment gardening, also provides a space for people who have no room to grow a garden at home.

PERMACULTURE DESIGN IN ACTION

Farm manager and co-ordinator, Ko Oishi, has a background in environmental science and is a passionate educator. With sound practical knowledge in applied permaculture, Ko loves demonstrating its principles in action.

As an example, he cites the garden's Three Sisters, "a combination of corn, beans and squash crops. The corn is tall, providing climbing support for the beans, while the squash provides groundcover."

Another illustration is the banana circle where "banana trees are planted on a circular mound dug out from the middle of the circle. Bananas don't like having wet feet, so they are raised, while having access to moisture and nutrients

that accumulate in the pit filled with compost." Across the circle run sweet potatoes, providing groundcover and a staple food source.

Permaculture is based on design principles wherein the individual components have multiple functions but also co-operate with other components within the system in a logical and practical manner to enhance the functionality of the whole.

Some plants, if not all, are especially useful in permaculture as they themselves are multipurpose. For example, lemon myrtle can be used for its shade, as a bird shelter and for its delicious aroma as well as for tea and dried as a herb.

Another permaculture favourite is the humble pigeon pea, a legume widely used in India to make dhal. It fixes nitrogen in the soil and can be used as trellis for climbing plants, as a hedge and a windbreak; its flowers attract bees; it

makes good firewood and mulch; and its deep roots improve soil structure and bring up subsoil minerals.

The farm also features many interesting and innovative manmade structures. One is the new hatchery for the sawfly larvae, a source of protein for the chickens. The larvae are bred on compost in a large bowl with an inbuilt spiral ramp for them to crawl up before they pupate. As the larvae crawl to the top, they fall out through a hole into a

bucket and are then fed to the chickens.

The Northey Street City Farm is a perfect demonstration of community growth and development through co-operation and education in self-sufficiency and sustainable living practices. If you live near Brisbane or are planning a visit, a tour of the farm and a trip to the Sunday market are a must. 🐔

For future events and workshops, visit the NSCF website, nscf.org.au

IN TOTAL, THE FARM HAS MORE THAN A THOUSAND CROP VARIETIES, INCLUDING RARE PLANTS SUCH AS TAMARIND, ICE-CREAM BEAN, CASSAVA AND TURMERIC.

5 Queensland arrowroot 6 Horatio the rooster on patrol 7 Pomegranate ready for picking 8 Avocados are abundant in this climate



TOP TIPS FROM NSCF

- 1 Plan before you plant: design your garden according to your needs; position relative to the sun, shade and wind, distance from the house and water source.
- 2 Take small steps, assess impacts and adapt before expanding your project.
- 3 Always grow foods suitable to your climatic conditions.
- 4 Mulch heavily to keep weeds down and save water.
- 5 Let your plants reseed themselves to save time and effort.



SNAIL TALES

A SUNSHINE COAST COUPLE DISCOVER
THE DELIGHTS OF HELICICULTURE
WITH A BUSINESS SUPPLYING
GASTROPODS FOR GASTRONOMES



Words & photos Carrol Baker

If you've ever tried eating escargots and found the sensation a little like eating a sandwich at the beach, that's probably because you've never tried the real deal: fresh garden snails.

Snail farmers Cliff Wilson and Mary Page of Glasshouse Gourmet Snails say most snails served up in restaurants are plucked right out of a tin. "They've been foraged in the wild and can taste quite gritty," Mary says.

Once you've sampled the gastronomic taste sensation of fresh snails, say Mary and Cliff, there's simply no going back.

Around 50,000 snails are in residence on the couple's leased acreage in the Sunshine Coast hinterland. The rambling rural property was previously owned by Bob Irwin, father of the late Crocodile Hunter Steve Irwin.

In their lush semitropical garden, there is an abundance of tropical plants as well as plenty of visiting wildlife,

including bandicoots, kangaroos, possums, rabbits and deer.

It's private, pristine and the perfect place for farming snails.

TURNING PESTS INTO PAYDAY

A few years ago, after watching an episode of ABC's *Landline*, Cliff became intrigued by the concept of snail farming and decided it was something he'd like to investigate a little further.

In 2008, when a friend handed over a box of 80 garden-variety brown *Helix aspersa* snails that had been running amok in the garden, Cliff and Mary began their business. From garden pest to gourmet delight, the rest, as they say, is history.

Speaking of history, Cliff says the science of breeding and caring for snails has been around for thousands of years. "It's the oldest form of animal husbandry in the world."

One story goes that a Roman, Fulvius Hirpinus, raised snails in Tuscany two millennia ago. The different varieties were kept in separate enclosures and fed on grain meal and boiled wine until they were plump and ready to be eaten.

True or not, while Cliff and Mary's snails don't get to sip wine, they do have pretty spiffy digs and are well fed and watered daily.

Once their first batch of snails outgrew their box — and they added a few thousand more to their stock from a local farm — they constructed wooden snail houses for their livestock.

"We had a rotunda erected and built pens using whatever we could find around the place," Mary says. "It was quite the snail Taj Mahal."

While breeding and raising snails might not be everyone's cup of tea, it's certainly become a viable business for the aged-care worker and her partner, a former sales executive. ➡➡



The escargots have a lush environment

AT A SNAIL'S PACE

Cliff devotes around two hours each day to caring for the snails and he reckons it's a pretty laid-back job: "It involves mucking out the pens, topping up water dishes, scooping chicken layer mash into the blender for the snails and giving them a light hose down in warmer weather."

During the rainy season, however, Cliff says it can get a little more labour-intensive as he has to round up the

troops if they decide to abscond from their pens. "If any of the snails escape, it's quite a job to track them down."

On the bottom of the snail pens are worms that live in the soil and process the snail waste plus any excess snail food, creating a rich fertile compost, which is then transferred to the couple's vegetable patch.

In the past, Cliff and Mary have grown an abundance of fresh, leafy crops but, with the drought-like conditions plaguing

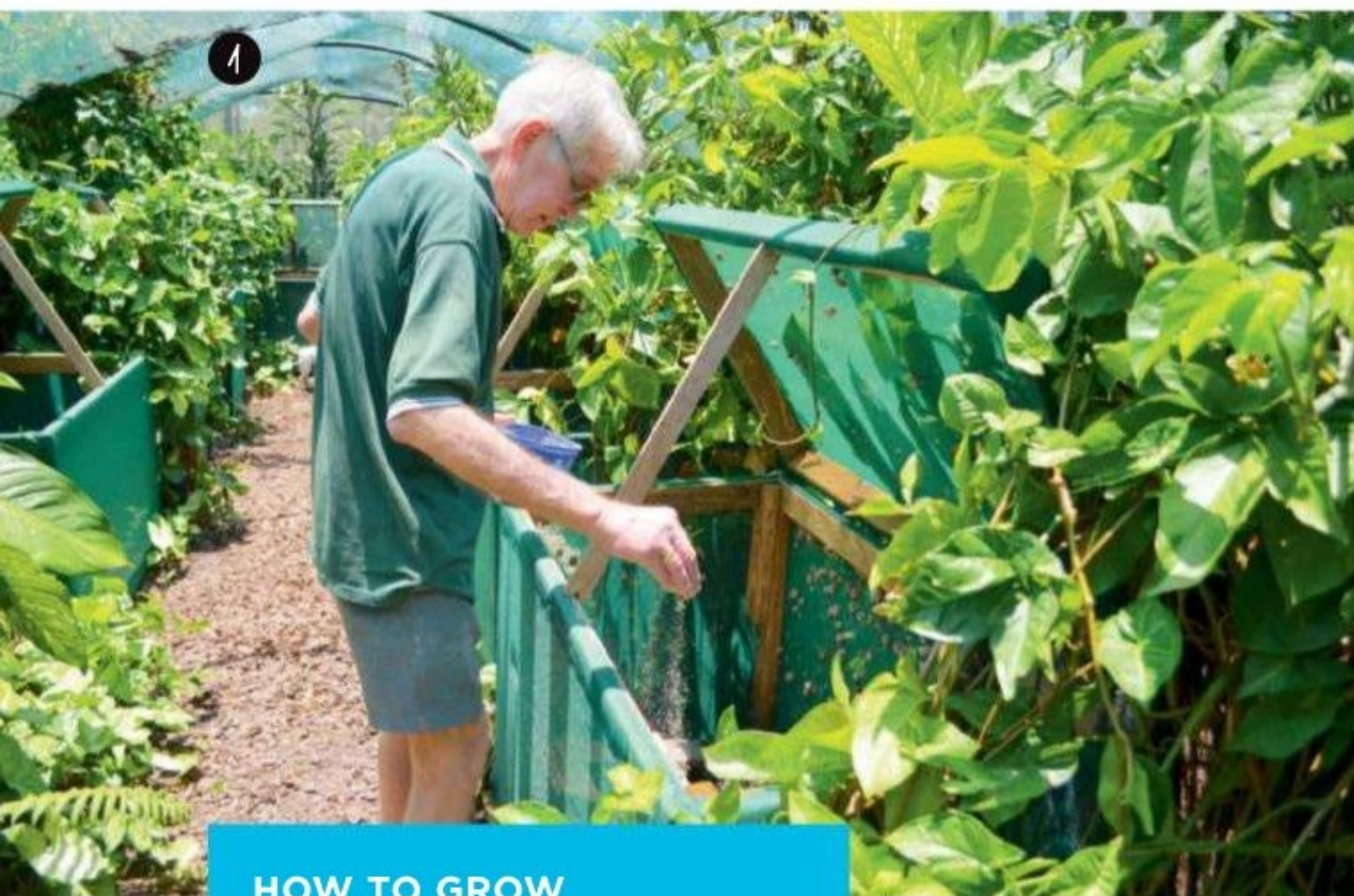
much of Queensland, their vegie patch is virtually dormant as the property isn't on town water.

"If we have water, we can feed ourselves just from the garden but the dam is almost dry at the moment," Mary says.

The couple are also ably assisted in their snail enterprise by rescue dog Boots, a Jack Russell Fox Terrier cross. He's a champion mouser and does the rounds of the pens each day with Cliff, so there's no need for pest control.

CLIFF SAYS THE SCIENCE OF BREEDING AND CARING FOR SNAILS HAS BEEN AROUND FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS. "IT'S THE OLDEST FORM OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY IN THE WORLD."

1 Cliff devotes a couple of hours a day to tending the snails
2 The couple grow fruit and vegetables for their own use 3 A taro patch



HOW TO GROW ESCARGOTS

- Build a small pen that air can flow through (timber pallet material works well) and cover with shade cloth.
- Line the bottom with basic potting mix (with no additives) and add a handful of worms.
- Erect a small raised platform across the base of the pen for the food (blended laying mash).
- Place a couple of saucers filled with water and give the snails a light spray of water in warm weather.



SNAIL SEX ED

Snails are hermaphrodites, meaning they have both male and female reproductive organs. Some snails even act as male one season and female the next, while others play both roles at once and fertilise each other simultaneously. "You need two to breed," Cliff explains. "They'll impregnate each other and lay between 70 and 120 eggs each."



4 A compact way to farm 5 Some of the 50,000 snails in residence here
6 Saucers of water are topped up daily 7 Cliff and Boots doing the rounds

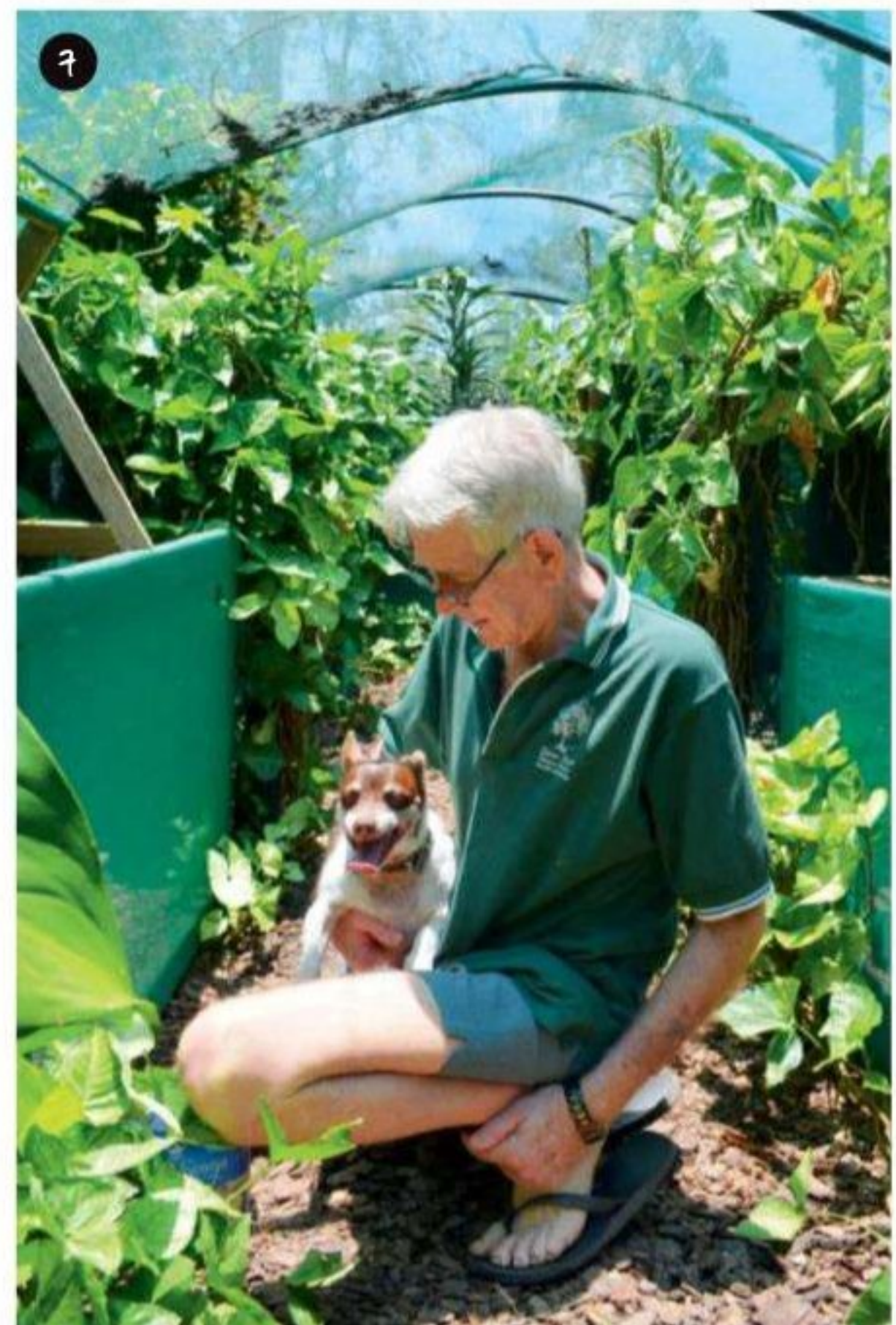
HARVESTING & EATING

When the snails are fully grown — between nine and 12 months of age — they're harvested as required to fill orders for wholesalers who then sell them to selected restaurants.

To prepare them, they must be purged with a water-only diet and sprayed daily for five days. Bagged in lots of two dozen, they're tagged and posted live and then cooked and served fresh.

Preparing snails is easy, Mary explains. After purging them, she puts them in boiling water for two and a half minutes then plunges them straight into cold water. "I remove them from their shell and serve them on a mushroom with the core removed and a generous dab of herb butter."

If you fancy having a go at growing your own snails, Cliff and Mary are more than happy to share some pointers. You can call them on (07) 5493 0890.



—MOON— PLANTING

MAY 2017

Late autumn means it's still a good time in most regions to get all those lovely health-giving brassicas and root vegetables into the garden

MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
1 	2 	3 ● 12:46pm	4 	5 	6 	7 
8 	9 	10 	11 ○ 7:42am	12 	13 	14 
15 	16 	17 	18 	19 ● 10:32am	20 	21 
22 	23 	24 	25 	26 ● 5:44am	27 	28 
29 	30 	31 				

JUNE 2017

Winter has officially arrived and, while it's a quieter time for planting in cooler regions, there's lots to put in the ground in the warmer zones

MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
			1 ● 10:42pm	2 	3 	4 
5 	6 	7 	8 	9 ○ 11:09pm	10 	11 
12 	13 	14 	15 	16 	17 ● 9:32pm	18 
19 	20 	21 	22 	23 	24 ● 12:32pm	25 
26 	27 	28 	29 	30 		

- New moon ○ Full moon
 ● First quarter ● Last quarter

When the moon is waxing from new moon to full moon, it is increasing light and drawing sap flow upwards. During the waning from full moon back to new moon, light decreases and sap is drawn downwards. This movement of sap flow has an influence on how well new plants will grow. There are four phases, each lasting seven to eight days. Sowing, planting and taking cuttings should not be done in the 12 hours before and after each phase. If you want to work in the garden at that time, carry out general tasks and improve your soil for planting.



FRUITING ANNUALS

Sow or plant annuals grown for their fruits or seeds. This is best done during the first quarter phase between first quarter and full moon, when sap is being drawn upwards.



ROOT CROPS

Sow or plant crops that produce below the ground, and also perennials. This is best done between full moon and last quarter when sap flow is being drawn downwards.



LEAFY GREENS

Sow or plant crops that are grown for their foliage. This is best done during the new moon phase between new moon and first quarter when sap is being drawn upwards.



AVOID PLANTING

The last quarter phase is not a good period for sowing or planting, so is best used working on improving soil, weeding, making compost and other general chores.

Times are Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST). Add 1 hour during daylight saving. WA, SA & NT will need to adjust.

TIME TO PLANT

DEPENDING ON YOUR CLIMATE ZONE, THERE'S STILL A LOT TO PLANT NOW TO HAVE PLENTY ON THE TABLE IN WINTER

COOL & HIGHLANDS



MAY

Artichoke, broad beans, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, chives, coriander, daikon, dill, endive, eschalots, garlic, Jerusalem artichoke, kohlrabi, lettuce, mibuna, mizuna, mustard greens, onion, parsley, radish, rocket, snow peas, spinach, sugar snap peas, turnips

TEMPERATE



Artichoke, Asian greens, asparagus, broad beans, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, chives, coriander, corn salad, daikon, dill, endive, eschalots, fennel, garlic, Jerusalem artichoke, kale, kohlrabi, leek, lettuce, mint, mizuna, mustard greens, onion, oregano, parsley, peas, radish, rocket, silverbeet, snow peas, spring onions, sugar snap peas, spinach, turnip

SUBTROPICAL



Artichoke, Asian greens, asparagus, beans, beetroot, broad beans, broccoli, burdock, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, celeriac, celery, chicory, chives, collard, coriander, daikon, dill, endive, eschalots, fennel, garlic, kale, kohlrabi, leek, lettuce, mint, mizuna, onion, oregano, parsley, parsnip, peas, potato, radish, rocket, silverbeet, snow peas, spinach, spring onions, swede, tomato, turnip

TROPICAL



Asian greens, amaranth, artichoke, asparagus, asparagus pea, basil, beans, beetroot, borage, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, capsicum, carrot, cauliflower, celeriac, celery, chicory, chillies, Chinese cabbage, chives, coriander, cucumber, daikon, eggplant, endive, eschalots, fennel, garlic, ginger, horseradish, kale, kohlrabi, leek, lettuce, marrow, mint, mizuna, okra, oregano, parsley, peas, potato, pumpkin, radish, rocket, salsify, silverbeet, spring onions, squash, swede, sweet corn, sweet potato (kumara), tarragon, tomato, turnip, zucchini

ARID



Artichoke, Asian greens, asparagus, broad beans, beetroot, broccoli, burdock, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, celery, Chinese cabbage, chives, collard, daikon, dill, endive, garlic, kale, kohlrabi, leek, lettuce, mint, mustard greens, onion, parsley, parsnip, peas, radish, rocket, silverbeet, snow peas, spinach, spring onions, sugar snap peas, swede, thyme, turnip

JUNE

Artichoke, asparagus, broad beans, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, endive, garlic, Jerusalem artichoke, lettuce, mustard greens, onion, radish, snow peas, spinach, sugar snap peas

Artichoke, asparagus, broad beans, broccoli, cabbage, chives, coriander, endive, garlic, Jerusalem artichoke, kale, lettuce, mint, mustard greens, onion, parsley, peas, radish, snow peas, spinach, sugar snap peas

Artichoke, Asian greens, asparagus, beans, beetroot, broad beans, broccoli, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, celeriac, celery, chicory, chives, coriander, daikon, dill, endive, eschalots, fennel, garlic, kale, kohlrabi, leek, lettuce, mint, mustard greens, onion, parsley, parsnip, peas, potato, radish, rocket, silverbeet, snow peas, spinach, spring onions, tomato, turnip

Asian greens, amaranth, artichoke, asparagus, asparagus pea, basil, beans, beetroot, borage, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, capsicum, carrot, celeriac, celery, chicory, chillies, Chinese cabbage, chives, choko, coriander, cucumber, daikon, dill, eggplant, endive, eschalots, fennel, garlic, ginger, horseradish, Jerusalem artichoke, kale, kohlrabi, leek, lettuce, mint, mizuna, mustard greens, okra, onion, oregano, parsley, potato, pumpkin, radish, rocket, rosemary, sage, silverbeet, spring onions, squash, swede, sweet corn, sweet potato (kumara), tarragon, thyme, tomatillo, tomato, turnip, zucchini

These maps are simplified versions adapted from climate maps by the Bureau of Meteorology and are only a rough guide. Microclimates can be formed anywhere.



WHEN SPEARS APPEAR

THIS FERNY PLANT COMES INTO
ITS OWN WHEN ITS TENDER
SHOOTS PUSH THROUGH THE SOIL
IN LATE WINTER/EARLY SPRING

Words Jennifer Stackhouse

Asparagus is a delicacy that can be grown in the garden if you have dedication, lots of restraint and a bit of space.

The edible part is the tender new shoot that appears like a green spear pointing out of the soil. It's easy to miss the first shoots of fresh asparagus, so keep a close watch on the bed in late winter and early spring. Unharvested shoots quickly become woody and unpalatable. The ideal size is 10–20cm long.

The spears mature into tall, slender stems up to 1.5m high with ferny green leaves. In summer, they may produce yellow flowers followed by berries. Asparagus is unusual as it has separate male and female plants. The male plants are preferred as they don't produce berries so don't set seed like the female plants do and their stems are usually thicker.

If asparagus is grown from seed, the plants can be either male or female, but most of the plants sold as crowns (dormant roots) are male.

Named varieties of asparagus that have been selected for shoot size and colour are available. 'Mary Washington' is commonly grown and has a thick spear, as does the aptly named 'Fat Bastard'. Both are heritage varieties.

For a kick of colour, select 'Purple', which, of course, has purple-tinged shoots. White asparagus isn't a variety but is grown by blanching the green spears to exclude light. Blanch by covering the row with a 30cm layer of soil before the shoots appear. This depth of soil excludes light so the stem remains white and tender rather than turning green.

Asparagus label

Common name: Asparagus

Botanical name: *Asparagus officinalis*

Family: Asparagaceae (formerly Liliaceae)

Requires: Sun to part shade; well-drained soil

Suitable for: Cool, Mediterranean, temperate, subtropical

Habit: Herbaceous perennial

Propagation: Crowns, seed

Difficulty: Moderate

HOW TO GROW

Asparagus is a herbaceous perennial that grows from spring to autumn then dies down over winter to start the cycle again when spring comes around. For ease of harvest, plant asparagus in rows. Select an open, sunny spot for an asparagus bed. It isn't suitable for growing in a container.

Prepare the soil for planting by digging in well-rotted manure and a complete organic fertiliser such as blood and bone. Asparagus is easiest to grow from crowns planted in winter while they are dormant. Seed is sown in spring. Plants may also be sold in pots in spring ready for immediate planting.

Plant asparagus crowns into a 30cm-deep trench lined with a layer of well-rotted manure, then cover the manure with a 5cm layer of soil (to keep the asparagus roots out of direct contact with manure). Alternatively, just dig a hole for each crown about 30cm deep and wide enough to accommodate the crown's root system.

Set the crowns in the base of the trench or hole, spreading out the roots. Space each crown about 45cm apart and

cover it with 5cm of soil. As the crown begins to grow, cover it with more soil until the trench or hole is filled. This style of planting encourages deep roots. If the soil is heavy clay, grow asparagus in raised beds to avoid problems with water logging or root rot, but still follow the same planting method.

Next comes the hard part. Although newly planted asparagus will shoot in spring, don't plan to eat fresh asparagus just yet. The young plants need these shoots to help them grow strong roots. For the first two years, allow the shoots to grow without harvesting any spears. Give a side dressing of fertiliser and manure in early summer to keep them growing. The ferny growth begins to yellow and die back in autumn. At this stage, cut the old growth to the ground.

Keep the area weed free — both while the spears are growing above ground and during the winter dormancy. Hill soil over the rows at the end of winter to encourage long, tender spears to grow.

If plants are well grown and not harvested for the first three years, they

have few problems. Thin or few spears suggest plants lack either nutrients or water (or both). To correct, spread a complete organic fertiliser around the plants and increase the amount of water the plants are getting. Keep the area well weeded and leave the spears un-harvested to encourage strong root growth.

WILD AND WEEDY

While asparagus has been introduced to Australia as a vegetable crop from its native Europe, it can be found growing wild in some parts of south-western New South Wales, naturalised around the irrigation channels. There are also forms of ornamental asparagus that have become weeds in Australia, including asparagus fern and bridal creeper, but these are not edible.

HARVESTING, STORING AND PRESERVING

Fresh, homegrown asparagus is delicious but is also packed with good nutrition in the form of vitamins A, B6, C and K, along with some potassium, selenium, copper and good amounts of dietary fibre. Asparagus also contain saponins, which are phytonutrients with anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer properties.

Use a long, sharp knife to harvest asparagus spears as they emerge at least 10cm from the soil. Cut below ground, harvesting each day as these fat stems grow fast and within a day or two form a woody, ferny branch. Spears appear from late winter or early spring (August or early September) and can be harvested for 10-12 weeks from mature plants. In colder areas, spears may not begin to form until late spring or early summer.

Fresh from the garden, asparagus is delicious either raw (try slicing it in a salad) or cooked, either by being lightly steamed or by microwaving for a minute or two. Sprinkle with parmesan, lemon and sea salt for a classic asparagus dish, or throw in a stir-fry.

Keep spears fresh by standing them in a container with a few centimetres of water, covering with plastic and placing in the refrigerator. As asparagus loses its freshness very quickly, it needs to be eaten or preserved soon after harvest to maximise both flavour and nutrient value.

To keep longer, blanch asparagus spears in boiling water, then immediately submerge in cold water and freeze. Asparagus can also be bottled using a water bath or preserving system. 



ONCE ESTABLISHED,
ASPARAGUS CAN
GROW AND CROP FOR
25 YEARS OR MORE.

1 White is not a variety but achieved
by cutting out light 2 The ferny plant



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The name asparagus is possibly a corruption of "sparrow grass", a medieval name that alludes to the plant's early spring harvest.



ALL HAIL KALE

SUPERFOOD STATUS HAS MADE THIS OLD-FASHIONED FAVOURITE A MUST FOR EVERY WINTER GARDEN

Words Jennifer Stackhouse

Kale has risen from relative obscurity to become a very trendy vegetable in recent years. It's even sold by the bunch in supermarkets and turns up on many restaurant menus. Much of this renewed interest comes down to its reputation as a "superfood". This leafy vegetable is packed with vitamins (including vitamin C, carotene and folacin), is rich in calcium and iron and is a source of dietary fibre.

The good news is you don't have to shop in the supermarket aisles or dine out to enjoy kale and benefit from its nutrients. This old-fashioned green is easy to grow with a little care, crops over a long period and is handy to have growing in winter and spring when fresh greens can be scarce.

Kale is also very ornamental and appeals to those who like to grow heirloom vegetables. Varieties have been grown for centuries, reinforcing this vegetable's heritage appeal. Some forms also have multiple names.

Some kales develop a thick stem topped by a rosette of cabbage-like leaves, while others are more compact with a rosette form. Best known is Tuscan kale, also called Cavolo nero or

Lacinato, which has long, quilted, slate-grey leaves. The leaves have the look of a small palm frond, which leads to another of its common names of black Tuscan palm. It forms a tall clump to around 60cm high and 30cm across and has long been used in Italian cooking, particularly, of course, in Tuscan recipes.

Other varieties include Red Russian, also known as Ragged Jack, which has frilly leaves and purple stems, while Squire has frilly blue-green leaves. Blue Curled Scotch kale has distinctly curled blue-green leaves, which forms a decorative element in the winter vegie garden. These kales grow to around 40–60cm high and 30cm wide.

Many garden centres offer mixed punnets of kale to give access to the wide variety of colours and forms available.

As well as edible kales, there are also cabbage-shaped plants that are grown solely as ornamentals favoured for their long-lasting and pretty foliage. These ornamental forms may have green leaves marbled with pink, purple or white and sometimes all these colours come together in a vibrant mix.

Coloured ornamental kales are sold under names such as 'Winter Wonder' and are useful as potted plants or to mass among annuals for autumn and

Kale label

Common name: Kale

Botanical name: *Brassica oleracea* (Acephala Group)

Family: Brassicaceae

Aspect & soil: Sun to part shade; moist but well-drained soil

Best climate: Cool to temperate

Habit: Biennial vegetable

Propagation: Seed, seedling

Difficulty: Easy to moderate

winter colour in garden beds and are not usually eaten.

FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Kale is part of the large brassica or cabbage family that also includes broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage and cauliflower along with lesser-known and perhaps soon-to-be-trendy green collards. Like these other brassicas, kale does best in a cool climate but it's also worth growing through winter in warmer climates.

It's particularly useful to grow through winter in areas with cold winters when little else grows. Although it isn't worried by cold or frost, it keeps growing as the weather warms. In crop rotation, kale and other brassicas can follow legumes.

HOW TO GROW

Kale grows best through the cooler months, so seeds are planted in summer and autumn. Seedlings are planted from autumn to spring to keep a good supply of greens growing through winter.

Seeds can be direct-sown where they are to grow, or started in seedling trays and then transplanted into the garden bed. Sow seeds at about 2cm depth and space seedlings 40–60cm apart, depending on the size of the variety being grown.

Like all brassicas, kale prefers a neutral to slightly alkaline soil (pH around 7). For acidic soil, digging in dolomite or lime while preparing for planting improves growing conditions. Also dig in compost and manure or an organic fertiliser before planting, to feed the developing plant.

Keep seedlings well watered as they establish. To promote strong growth,

feed the developing plants monthly, providing a side dressing of organic fertiliser (such as pelletised chicken or blood and bone). Alternatively, apply an organic liquid-feed fortnightly.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Its susceptibility to pests and some diseases is what lifts kale from easy to moderate on the ease-of-growing scale. Cabbage white butterfly caterpillars, aphids and club root are all problems that may be encountered when growing kale. Regularly searching over the foliage and removing the green caterpillars by hand is the best organic remedy, but large infestations can be treated with the organically acceptable Bt (sold as Dipel) or spinetoram.

Club root is harder to combat but can be controlled by growing plants in

alkaline soil (club root favours acidic soils) and by following crop rotation principles so brassicas are not grown in the same garden bed for several seasons.

Kale that is heat or water stressed may also be tough to eat.

HARVEST AND USE

Kale is a biennial plant that keeps growing and can be harvested throughout the year. Harvesting can begin at around seven to eight weeks after planting or when the plant has produced enough leaves so some can be picked without affecting the plant's growth. Harvest leaf by leaf, as needed.

This is a versatile vegetable. It can be cooked like spinach, added to soups or sauces, or individual or torn leaves can be fried or baked as a chip. It can also be juiced or used in pickles. 🥗



KALE IS ALSO VERY ORNAMENTAL AND APPEALS TO THOSE WHO LIKE TO GROW HEIRLOOM VEGETABLES. VARIETIES HAVE BEEN GROWN FOR CENTURIES, REINFORCING THIS VEGETABLE'S HERITAGE APPEAL.



1 Decorative kale 2 Easy to grow in the cooler months
3 Cavolo nero — a popular variety



GREAT WHITES

IT MAY NOT BE THE EASIEST VEGETABLE TO GROW, BUT SWEET HOMEGROWN PARSNIP IS WELL WORTH THE WORK

Words Jennifer Stackhouse

Parsnip is not a very popular vegetable and isn't eaten as much as it once was. Most of us would consume parsnip occasionally, often as part of a roasted meal. With our ready access to carrots, potato and other starchy crops, parsnip has slipped from favour among roast vegies, but it can be used in many other ways to give it a new look including as a puree, mash, chips or in soup.

It was widely grown and used as a staple in Europe and the name crops up in ancient writings. Parsnip's botanic name (*Pastinaca sativa*) reflects this, as the genus name translates as "food" (from *pastus*), while the species name *sativa* means "cultivated".

Parsnip was at its zenith in the 19th and early-20th centuries when it was favoured for its sweetness. Most of the varieties grown today originated more than 100 years ago. 'Hollow Crown', the variety commonly grown today in gardens and favoured for its long, cream root, has been cultivated since the 1920s.

Other old varieties available include 'Guernsey' and 'Large Jersey' (both of which originated in the Channel Isles). 'Early Short' is another heritage variety, as is 'Tender and True', which, according

to the Seed Savers Network, was named after a popular song from the 19th century. 'Melbourne Whiteskin' is an old Australian selection that's still available and also grown commercially.

Parsnips are still grown as a competitive vegetable with growers vying for the longest or heaviest parsnip. To get the extraordinary lengths that are achieved, these show vegetables are grown above ground in narrow sleeves such as pipes or gutters. The record for the longest parsnip is 5.6m, while the heaviest parsnip tipped the scales at 7.85kg.

GETTING STARTED

Although a parsnip resembles a white carrot, it's not as easy to grow as a carrot or its other close relative, parsley. For success with homegrown parsnip, start with fresh seed. Seed that's old or that has not been carefully stored has a low germination rate.

Parsnip can be grown in all climates, but for success it's important to get timing right. In the tropics and subtropics, sow parsnip in late summer or autumn to grow through the dry season. In cooler zones, parsnip seed is sown from late winter to summer for an autumn to winter harvest.

Parsnip label

Common name: Parsnip

Botanical name: *Pastinaca sativa*

Family: Apiaceae (carrot family)

Aspect & soil: Sun; deep, well-drained soil

Best climate: All

Habit: Biennial grown as an annual root vegetable

Propagation: Seed

Difficulty: Moderate to hard

Parsnips grow best in light, deep soils that allow the roots to penetrate easily and develop to a good size. A mature parsnip can form a 30cm-long root, so prepare the soil to at least this depth before planting.

As with carrots, avoid digging in fresh organic matter before sowing seed. There's a link between excess organic matter in the soil and forking of the root of both carrots and parsnip. A good option is to plant parsnips in soil that was fertilised for a previous crop, such as a leafy vegetable, so the plants can use the residual nutrients. Alternatively, thoroughly dig in an organic fertiliser other than manure before planting.

To give seeds the highest chance of germination, sow them directly into

damp, prepared soil, planting in rows. Parsnips don't transplant well so are not usually available as seedlings.

Sow the seed in shallow rows around 6-10mm deep then lightly cover the seed with fine soil or a layer of vermiculite, which can reduce losses due to damping off, which is a fungal disease. A fine layer of mulch over the soil surface can also help encourage germination by ensuring the soil stays damp. It can take three to four weeks for seeds to germinate, so patience is needed.

It's fiddly, but space the seeds 10cm apart to allow room for each plant to reach its mature size. If you've been heavy-handed, thin seedlings when they reach 5cm high.

GROWING PARSNIPS

Although poor germination can make parsnips a challenge to grow, once they are growing, they tend to be free of pest and disease problems but do need protection from snails and slugs.

Keep the soil moist and free of weeds. When parsnip plants are growing, apply a side dressing of organic fertiliser or liquid-feed regularly. Keep plants well watered to avoid any stress that may send them into premature flower formation (known as bolting).

Left unharvested, parsnips, which are biennial plants, produce flower stems in their second year. Parsnip flowers are yellow, arranged in umbels (heads) and followed by broad, flat seeds that should be sown soon after they ripen. Parsnip has broad, flat leaves a little like those of parsley or coriander.

HARVEST, STORAGE AND PRESERVING

As well as looking good in a mix of roast vegies, parsnips are highly nutritious, supplying potassium along with vitamin C and dietary fibre. They are naturally sweet with the sweetest parsnips grown in cooler climates. They benefit from a winter chill before harvest, which

increases their sweetness by converting starches in the root to sugars.

Parsnip roots can be left in the ground and harvested as needed, although there's a risk of the roots becoming woody, especially if the plants reach the stage of flowering and setting seed. If the leaves die down, there's also a risk that the roots will be overlooked, so mark plantings before they die back. In areas with wet winters or poorly drained soil, harvest parsnips in autumn or well before rainy periods occur.

Pull the plants up carefully from the ground to avoid damaging the root. Remove the leaves after harvesting, cutting them close to the top of the root (take care as the leaves can cause allergies in some people) as this improves storage.

Store in a cool, airy room or well wrapped in the crisper section of the fridge. They can also be preserved by bottling or freezing. Their high sugar content means they can be used to make wine. 🍷

... THESE SHOW VEGETABLES ARE GROWN ABOVE GROUND IN NARROW SLEEVES SUCH AS PIPES OR GUTTERS. THE RECORD FOR THE LONGEST PARSNIP IS 5.6M, WHILE THE HEAVIEST PARSNIP TIPPED THE SCALES AT 7.85KG.

Below Flowers form in the second year *Right* Parsnip germination rates can be low



DID YOU KNOW?

Waste not, want not: in Italy, parsnips are prized as feed for pigs raised for Parma ham.



NOBLE LEAVES

ONE BAY TREE WILL PROVIDE ALL THE LEAVES YOU'LL EVER NEED TO FLAVOUR YOUR SOUPS, CASSEROLES AND SAUCES.

Words Jennifer Stackhouse

I don't need to grow a bay tree as my neighbour regularly appears with a branch from his tree, which he prunes each year and distributes to the neighbourhood's cooks. I strip the leaves and dry them to use for flavouring stocks and casseroles.

Bay trees are handsome evergreens that can be clipped and managed to grow in any shape or position, even in a large container in a courtyard. Although these are trees, they can be kept to around 2m high with pruning or clipping and training as a topiary plant.

Left unpruned, these shrubby plants eventually form large, woody trees 7-12m high. Don't panic, though, as bay trees are the sloths of the plant world. These enormous heights are reached only after many years of growth.

As well as enjoying regular pruning and slowly reaching lofty heights, bay trees sucker to form thickets, which make these trees a very useful hedging plant. The bay is native to the Mediterranean region where it was once a widespread forest tree.

BAY TREE IN HISTORY

The species name, *nobilis*, gives a hint at how important the bay laurel has

been through history. As it is tough and evergreen, it was used in Ancient Greece to fashion wreaths and crowns that were worn to indicate high status. There is still a baccalaureate and a poet laureate, which reflect the status of the bay laurel.

In Roman times, bay or laurel wreaths were presented to winning athletes and Olympians. This use has given rise to the expression "resting on one's laurels" for someone who has achieved a victory once but not again.

The bay tree is also known from Greek legends. The nymph Diana is said to have turned herself into a bay tree to escape the pursuing god Apollo. In Greece, the bay is known as "daphne".

GROWING A BAY

Bay trees are readily available to buy in pots ready to plant. Look in the herb section of the garden centre for small plants or, for larger specimens fashioned as topiaries, look among the outdoor potted plant range. Bay trees can be planted at any time of the year but are often available as evergreen trees for planting in late autumn and winter.

As small bay trees can be sensitive to cold and frost, hold off planting them outdoors in very cold areas until spring has arrived and all threat of frost is over.

Bay label

Common name: Bay, bay laurel, sweet bay

Botanical name: *Laurus nobilis*

Family: Lauraceae (laurel family)

Requires: Full sun to part shade; well-drained soil

Dislikes: Poor drainage

Suitable for: Cool to temperate

Habit: Evergreen tree

Propagation: Seed, cuttings, potted plants

Difficulty: Easy

Bay trees can also be grown from seed, which is sown in autumn as the berries mature, or from cuttings taken at any time.

Keep newly planted trees well watered until they've established in their new location. Once there are signs of new growth, ease back on watering. Eventually, you'll probably forget the tree altogether. In containers, however, continue to water occasionally, especially if the tree is sheltered from natural rain.

Although these trees can be grown in the sun, they do best in a more sheltered spot with shade, especially afternoon shade. While any soil is suitable for growing a bay tree, fertile, well-drained soils are best. In

a container, choose a good-quality potting mix. As the tree may be in the container for many years, add around 10 per cent clean garden soil or compost.

In cool, mild or Mediterranean climates with low humidity, bay trees suffer few pest problems but in more humid areas, they may be attacked by white wax scale. This can be treated with pest oil or simply prune off badly affected branches. To keep the scale from returning, give the tree a small amount of fertiliser and extra water. If it's in a very dark spot, it may benefit from having surrounding growth pruned to give it more light and better air circulation.

AS WELL AS ENJOYING REGULAR PRUNING AND SLOWLY REACHING LOFTY HEIGHTS, BAY TREES SUCKER TO FORM THICKETS, WHICH MAKE THESE TREES A VERY USEFUL HEDGING PLANT.

HARVESTING AND USING BAY

Bay leaves can be harvested at any time and used either fresh or dried. Select well-sized leaves without pests. Bay leaves add a depth of flavour and form part of a bouquet garni (along with parsley and rosemary). As well as adding several to any slow-cooked meat or vegetable dish, they can also be used to flavour white sauces. Bay leaves are usually removed before the dish or sauce is served as they are tough and not good to eat.

To dry bay leaves, simply hang up a bunch of stems in a dry, airy place or remove leaves and dry them in a food dehydrator. Select large, mature leaves for drying. Store dried leaves in a sealed container in a pantry. Well-dried leaves can last for up to 12 months. 🌿

DID YOU KNOW?

Bay trees have male and female flowers on separate plants. The female flowers are followed by berries.



- 1 Bays make good topiary trees
- 2 Dry the leaves for cooking
- 3 Bay leaves were traditionally made into laurel wreaths



AUTUMN FLAVOUR

LOOKING FOR A DIFFERENT FRUIT TO GROW? THIS SOUTH AMERICAN NATIVE IS A COMPACT EVERGREEN TREE THAT CAN BE ESPALIERS OR EVEN HEDGED

Words Melissa King

If you're after a tough, productive tree for your garden, don't overlook the feijoa. It's an attractive small evergreen tree that's native to South America, with silvery leathery foliage, beautiful scarlet flowers in spring and a good batch of egg-shaped fruit in autumn.

Feijoa is sometimes called the pineapple guava because the pulp of the fruit is guava-like and the flesh tastes a bit like pineapple sherbet. You can eat the fruit in much the same way as you do kiwifruit: slice it in half and scoop out the flesh then perhaps make a batch of jam with the leftover fruit.

Most varieties grow up to 4.5m tall but can be kept lower with pruning. They make wonderful edible hedges (see our feature on edible hedges in last issue). They also form attractive flowering and fruiting windbreaks or screens. You can even espalier them against a fence or courtyard wall.

Among the named varieties, 'Mammoth' is a standout with extra-big round to oval-shaped fruit and good flavour. 'White Goose' is a good early cropper with sweet fruit and smooth, juicy pulp, or you might like to try 'Apollo' with medium to large fruit that ripens mid to late season. 'Nazematze' is another tasty form with pear-shaped fruit and sweet flesh. If space is limited, try planting Feijoa 'Unique', a smaller-growing variety to just 2.5m tall.

Feijoa label

Common name: Feijoa, also pineapple guava

Botanical name: *Acca sellowiana*

Group: Evergreen shrub to small tree

Requires: Full sun; well-drained soil

Suitable for: Orchards, seaside plantings

Habit: Summer flowering, autumn fruiting

Needs: Long, warm growing season; winter chilling

Propagation: Cutting

Difficulty: Moderate

FEIJOA IS SOMETIMES CALLED THE PINEAPPLE GUAVA BECAUSE THE PULP OF THE FRUIT IS GUAVA-LIKE AND THE FLESH TASTES A BIT LIKE PINEAPPLE SHERBET.

GROWING CONDITIONS

Feijoas are both heat- and cold-tolerant and can cope with temperature extremes from -7°C to 40°C, but they need at least 50 hours of winter chilling to produce a good crop.

POLLINATION

Some varieties are self-fertile, but even these types bear a heavier crop if cross-pollinated. Others require a pollinating partner, so do your research and read the label carefully before you buy.

HARVEST

You can expect a good crop of fruit from most trees within three to four years. Feijoa flowers are sweet and edible, too, so add the petals to drinks and desserts.



DID YOU KNOW?

Feijoas are part of the fragrant myrtle family, which includes eucalyptus, allspice, guavas and cloves.



Above Feijoa's pretty flower Right Tastes like a combination of pineapple, guava and strawberry



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TIMELESS TREE

ONCE, ALMOST EVERY BACKYARD HAD A MULBERRY TREE, AND THERE'S NO REASON WHY YOU SHOULDN'T STILL ENJOY THIS LUSCIOUS FRUIT IF SPACE ALLOWS

Words Melissa King

You can spend hours sitting under a mulberry tree, devouring the ripe berries one by one. A garden-fresh feast is definitely one of the best ways to enjoy them, but mulberries also make delicious pies, sauces, jams and wine. They make a sweet sun-dried treat for the kids, too.

Mulberries are big deciduous trees that provide summer shade, winter sunlight and a sumptuous crop of fruit from late spring through to summer. The fruit ripens over an extended period, which is an added bonus, because you don't get a glut of ripe mulberries all at once.

Black mulberries are super-yummy, the perfect balance of sweetness and tartness. 'Black English' is a good choice for cooler areas, boasting an abundance of sweet black fruit, or try 'Hick's Fancy' with long red-black berries that ripen from late spring onwards.

The dwarf mulberry 'Red Shahtoot' is perfect for smaller gardens, with delicious red fruit up to 10cm long, while 'Gayes Pink' has a sweet crop of pink berries and a weeping habit. It grows well in the subtropics.

Then there are top-notch white-fruited varieties such as 'White Shahtoot', which has become a backyard favourite with long, sweet, white fruit on a more compact tree. It's a great choice for the kids because, unlike the purple-red varieties, the fruit doesn't stain. You can even grow it in decorative pots and containers.

The weeping mulberry (*Morus alba* 'Pendula') is another good choice for smaller gardens with long, cascading branches that reach the ground.

Mulberry label

Common name: Mulberry
Botanical name: *Morus nigra*
Family: Moraceae
Aspect & soil: Sun; fertile, well-drained soil
Best climate: Most
Habit: Large deciduous tree
Propagation: Cuttings in winter
Difficulty: Easy

GROWING

Mulberries have a wide growing climate. They can be grown in most parts of Australia except hot tropical areas, but they do need some chilling to produce a good crop and will demand more water in dry areas. They perform best in full sun in an area that has been well prepared with compost and organic matter. Keep the water up through summer and prune in winter after flowering to promote new fruiting growth.

GROWING TIP

Mulberry trees can grow up to 12m tall with lush, dense foliage, so give them room to grow. If space is tight, consider dwarf or weeping types. The ripe fruit can stain hard surfaces and paved areas, so choose a spot over lawn or be quick to harvest the ripe fruit!

HARVEST TIP

Mulberries don't ripen off the tree, so pick them when they are ripe and fully coloured. The birds love them, too, so be sure to net your trees. 🐦



Above The white variety won't stain your clothes
Right Sweet, juicy black mulberries



DID YOU KNOW?

The white mulberry tree (*Morus alba*) is the food of choice for silkworms.



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IF THERE ARE FEATHERED OR
FURRY MEMBERS IN YOUR FAMILY,
WHY NOT GROW SOMETHING
NICE FOR THEM AS WELL?

Words & photos Claire Bickle

Gardening isn't only about growing our own food and making things look pretty. There are other dimensions to explore when designing and choosing your planting palette. What about selecting plants that benefit your pets and even local wildlife?

For me, this happens

automatically. Growing edibles for our guinea pig team and, of course, our poultry flock reduces the feed bill and gives our pets their much-needed vitamin and mineral requirements via greens, herbs and vegetables.

You can also create habitat and food sources for local wildlife, including insects.

So which plants for what animal?



Catnip



Cat herbs

FELINE FRIENDS

Cat grass or pet grass helps cats with digestion and removal of fur balls and gives them a great range of vitamins and minerals in their diets. Plants such as catnip, catmint and cat thyme are amusement plants for your cats as they are usually attracted to the scent of the foliage and can often be seen rolling

around and rubbing their faces on these plants.

Catnip *Nepeta cataria*: An annual growing to 40cm with white flowers.

Cat mint *Nepeta mussinii* & *Nepeta x faassenii*: This beautiful flowering plant comes in a range of varieties these days with blue, purple, pink or mint flowers, and varies in height from 20cm to 1m.

Cat thyme *Teucrium marum*: A small-growing silver-leaved perennial with a pungent smell and delightful bright-purple flowers.

Cat grass *Dactylis glomerata*: This grass is a favourite among cats and dogs. They will happily chew and digest it daily at my house. I grow mine in pots for easy access.



Pennyroyal



Cat grass

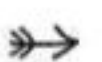
DOGGIE PALS

Dogs, like cats, enjoy eating grass on a regular basis to aid with digestion and consume much-needed minerals and vitamins.

External parasites such as fleas can be costly and time-consuming to control. Growing flea-repellent plants such as pennyroyal can help if you plant it around your pet's yard and even rub it onto their coat. Of course, pennyroyal alone is not going to be a complete control measure. See your vet if flea outbreaks are severe.

Pennyroyal *Mentha pulegium*: A low-growing perennial in the mint family, not to be ingested. Best used externally as a pest repellent. It has round, mauve, ball-like flowers that rise 20cm above the green matting of foliage below.

Pet grass *Dactylis glomerata*: As for cats.



WEEKEND GARDENING | PLANTS FOR PETS

HAPPY HORSES

Horses benefit greatly when they have around a five to 10 per cent browse plant species in their diets. Plants such as nettles, milk thistles, alfalfa, peas, legumes, ice-cream beans and tagaste are just a few of the many plant species that can be grown to supplement your horse's diet.

Holistic horse care professionals also recommend a variety of herbs for various ailments and health improvements. Calendula, chamomile, fennel, dandelion, mint and echinacea are a few that can be incorporated into a horse's diet to help with inflammation, skin healing, digestive issues and so forth.

Aloe vera: A succulent that will grow in a sunny or semi-shaded location and will tolerate dry conditions but will appreciate regular watering. Grow in the garden or pots. It has many uses for horses both topically and internally for digestive issues and ulcers.

Nettle *Urtica dioica*: These annual weed-like plants are full of minerals and nutrients and can even be made into nettle tea and liquid fertilisers. Keep in mind that dry foliage and stems can cause a nasty reaction when touched.

1 Carob pods on carob tree 2 Nettle 3 Aloe vera leaves



Carob tree *Ceratonia siliqua*: A slow-growing drought-hardy tree to 8m, the carob is, of course, well known for its edible pods that are often used in the production of a chocolate substitute. There are male and female trees. Grow in a sunny, well-drained location as a fodder plant. Your horse will love the pods.



Tagasaste (tree lucerne)

***Chamaecytisus palmensis*:** Check weed status for your location. There's a large range of leguminous plants that can be grown as fodder for horses. Check with your local department of primary industry for recommended species for your area.



THE LITTLE PIGGIES

Vegetables, herbs, grasses, seeds, tomatoes, celery, cucumbers, basil, parsley, coriander, silver beet and even overgrown zucchinis go down a treat with these little pets. We have a team of four guinea pigs and, believe me, these guys are the munchomatics at our place because they never seem to stop eating. So being able to grow a range of edibles that can reduce the feed bill is a bonus.

Grasses: Guinea pigs will happily free-range eat a range of grasses and weeds. Remember that they cannot see very far

but do have good hearing, so be sure to keep them in predator-proof housing while they are free ranging.

Basil *Ocimum basilicum* 'Sweet Basil': A popular annual herb growing to 60cm. The white flowers are also a great bee fodder source.

Coriander *Coriandrum sativum*: Another very popular culinary annual herb that's best grown throughout the cooler months. Flowers, foliage and seed are all edible.

Tomato *Solanum lycopersicum*: Everyone knows the fruit of love — the

tomato — and our guinea pigs go wild for their tomato treats once a week.

Silver beet *Beta vulgaris*: An easy-to-grow annual vegetable that can be planted just about all year round. Hang bunches for chooks as well.

Parsley *Petroselinum crispum*: A short-lived perennial that grows to 20cm. There's an Italian form that has a larger leaf and grows more like 60–80cm high.

All the above like a humus-rich soil in a sunny location when being grown in the ground and, if growing them in pots, be sure to use a good-quality potting mix.

FEATHERED FRIENDS CAGED BIRDS

A range of caged birds will happily enjoy the addition of fresh fruit, vegetables and seeds in their diets. Also consider what plant species are good choices for aviary plantings to offer protection from the elements, nesting locations and hiding and roosting spots. Be sure to check whether plants are poisonous to your aviary birds.

An assortment of vegetables for your caged birds will also reduce feed costs and provide a source of fresh food. Choices

include zucchini, carrots, silver beet, snow peas, celery and corn on the cob.

Sunflower *Helianthus annuus*:

Sunflowers are a popular tall-growing summer annual. These days, there are dwarf forms available, making it easier for people with small backyards. Flowers come in all shades of yellow and even burgundy. Collect seeds once flowers have finished and seed has set.

Pigweed *Portulaca oleracea*: Usually seen as a weed, pigface is slowly becoming a favourite bush tucker green. It's relished by birds, including poultry.

Chickweed *Stellaria media*: Another weed species making its way to the dining plate, but once again poultry and caged birds love it. You can even buy it as seed from a variety of seed companies. Grow in seed-raising trays.

CHOOKS

Poultry get much-needed vitamin A from consuming a good range of greens. The top greens I grow for our flock are comfrey, chicory, dandelion and all excess or past-it vegetable crops.

Growing plants around the coop for shade and protection from prevailing winds and weather is another consideration. We grow a lot of *Cajanus cajan* (pigeon pea) around our chook coops. They are fast-growing to around 3m and can be used as a chop-and-drop mulch and the young growth and pea pods can be fed to your poultry as well.

Mulberry and other fruiting trees can also be an attractive addition to your poultry run. You'll need to protect them while establishing or your fowl will scratch, damage and expose the roots and even possibly eat the foliage. Trees provide shade and the chooks will eat insects along with excess or damaged fruit.

Comfrey *Symphytum officinale*: A deep-rooted perennial herb that forms a large rosette of furry green leaves, which can also be used to make a liquid fertiliser or be added to the compost heap as an activator. Hang in bunches for your poultry to pick at.

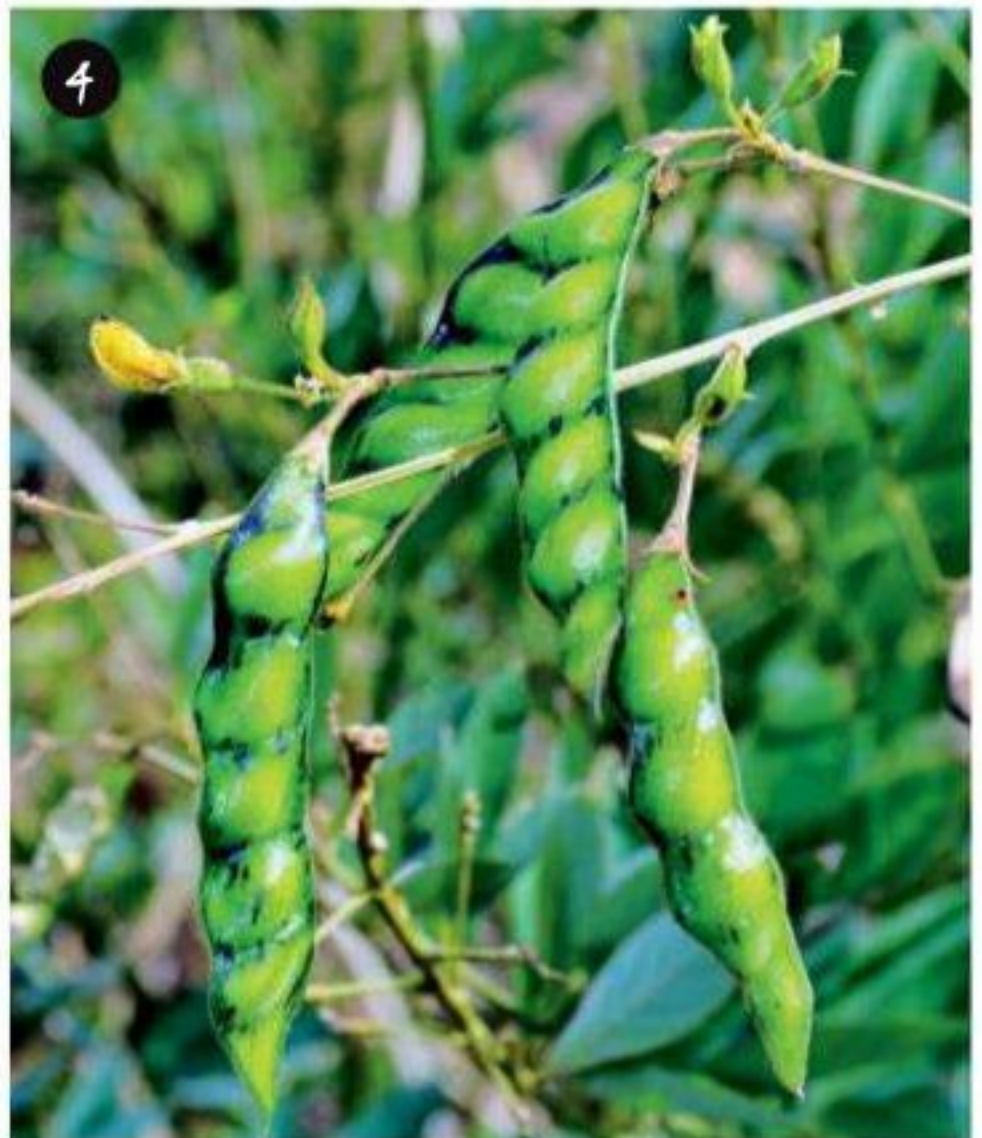
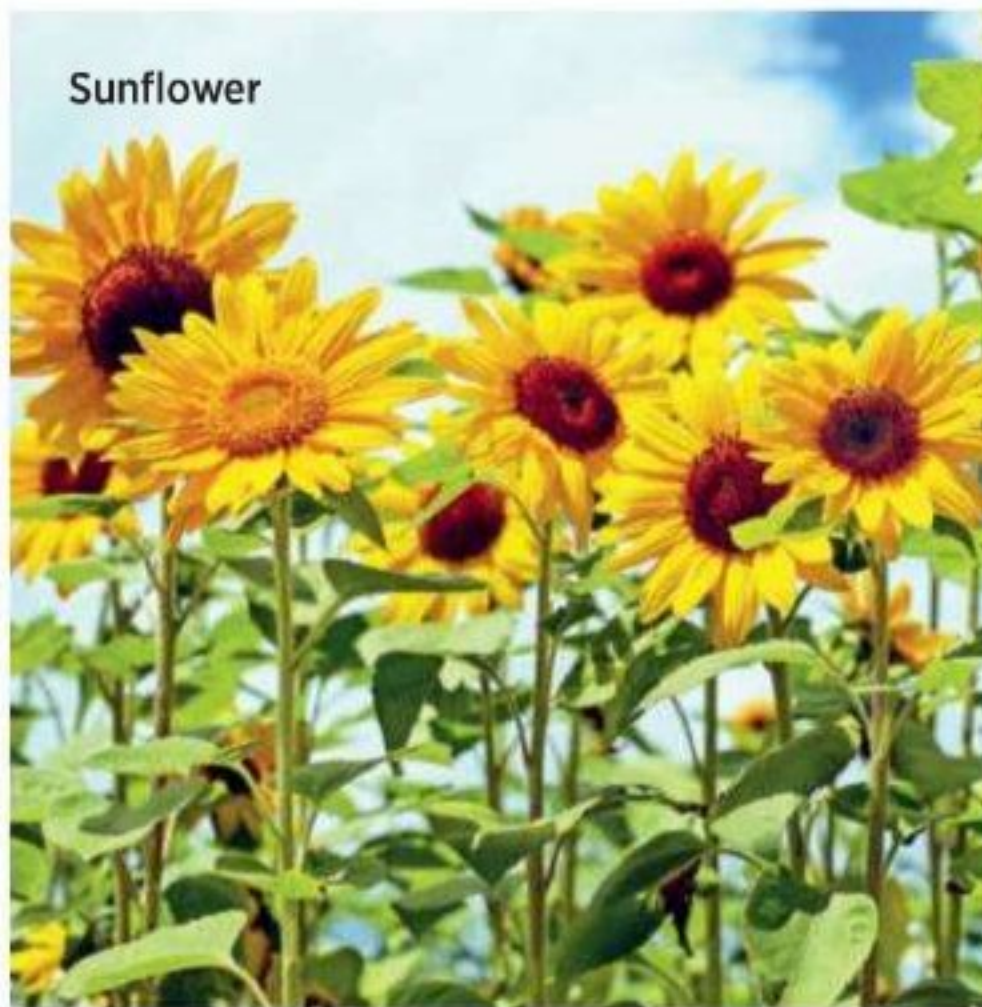
Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*:

Known as a weed, the European dandelion grows like a flat rosette of foliage and produces beautiful yellow flowers on a stem that rises 20–30cm above the foliage. These are the dandelions that produce those seed heads children like to blow.

Chicory *Cichorium intybus*: A bitter-tasting green perennial that poultry just love. The beautiful blue flowers are also edible.

Wormwood *Artemisia absinthium*: All species of wormwood can be used to line your chooks' nesting boxes and coop to deter external parasites. Grow in full sun with good drainage. The silver foliage makes it a great contrast plant.

Nasturtium *Tropaeolum majus*: These much-loved flowering annuals are reputed to have a natural antibiotic effect. Leaves and flowers can be added to your poultry's diet on a regular basis. They are also edible for humans.



4 Pigeon pea, or gandules, on tree 5 Nasturtium 6 Red stemmed chicory 1 Comfrey



GARDENS FOR ALL

WITH A LITTLE THOUGHT AND
PLANNING, EVERYONE CAN IMPROVE
THEIR WELLBEING BY GARDENING,
INCLUDING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Words Jennifer Stackhouse

Many studies of the benefits of gardening have shown that the activity of gardening, along with merely being in a green, leafy environment, has huge benefits to human health and wellbeing. For those with physical disabilities or dementia, gardening or just being in a garden has many positive benefits and can be life changing. How sad, then, when lack of mobility or difficult access make it impossible for someone to garden or even enjoy the outdoors.

There are now many community gardens and gardens associated with hospitals and care homes that are accessible to people with disabilities, and a growing band of horticultural therapists who use gardening to improve motor and cognitive skills as well as self-esteem, communication and wellbeing. But what about home gardens? Sadly, many are difficult to access and maintain when disabilities occur or gardeners become less mobile with age or illness.

A visit to a garden that is accessible

to those with disabilities is a good first step in understanding what's necessary for creating an accessible garden at home. To see how user-friendly your garden is, try accessing it while pushing a pram or when blindfolded, or try to work in the garden sitting on a chair rather than bending or kneeling. These simple experiments quickly reveal where modifications might be needed.

CREATING AN ACCESSIBLE GARDEN

The number-one factor to make a garden better suited to someone with a disability such as restricted movement or failing eyesight is to make the garden wheelchair-friendly. If a garden is wheelchair accessible, then it is accessible for anyone who has difficulty walking, moving or seeing. Wheelchair access means using ramps rather than steps to change levels and a gentle gradient that can be easily negotiated. To safely manage a wheelchair on a slope, the gradient needs to be 1:20 and not steeper than 1:12.

As well as getting the slope right,

paths should be wide and firm with an even surface. The minimum path width for wheelchair access is 1m, but paths need to be 1.5m wide to accommodate turning a wheelchair and even wider to allow two wheelchairs to pass.

Suitable path surfaces include asphalt, wood, well-laid bricks or pavers, concrete, compacted granite or a mix of these in response to the environment and the special needs of the gardener (for example, concrete may be a good surface for a wheelchair or walker but could be very glary for someone who has sight impairment). Two of the commonly used surfaces — woodchip and lawn — are not good surfaces for wheelchairs or walking frames. For ease of navigation, paths may need to be edged or have a handrail.

While these facilities can be constructed by a home handyperson, working with a qualified builder or landscape contractor will ensure access ramps and paths are well built and meet acceptable standards. There are also garden designers and landscape architects who specialise in garden designs for people with disabilities. ➡➡



Raised beds and level pathways

A VISIT TO A GARDEN THAT IS ACCESSIBLE TO THOSE WITH DISABILITIES IS A GOOD FIRST STEP IN UNDERSTANDING WHAT'S NECESSARY FOR CREATING AN ACCESSIBLE GARDEN AT HOME.



1 Raised beds and barrel plantings make this garden accessible
2 Level, smooth pathways make it easy to navigate the garden

DEMENTIA GARDENS

Gardens have also been shown to be therapeutic for people with dementia. However, for a garden to be safe and secure for these users, there are specific inclusions to consider. Key requirements for dementia sufferers are security, an obscured boundary fence, directional signs to avoid confusion and plants that are safe but which may also attract birds and insects or evoke memories. It's also important to include other sensory stimulation such as a water feature, wind chimes and ornamentation, along with shaded seating.

RAISED GARDEN BEDS

Once overall access is sorted, the next issue is to be able to reach soil and plants so someone who has a disability can physically work in a garden. The most widely used solution is to build raised garden beds that are either accessible from all sides or fully accessible from one side.

For a bed to be accessible to someone in a wheelchair or who needs to be seated as they garden, it needs to be 60cm from the ground and no more than 50–60cm wide (or as far as you can reach leaning across from a seated position) if accessed only from one side, or up to 1.2m across if accessed from both sides.

As well as providing ease of access for digging, planting and maintenance, raised beds can be fitted with exclusion nets to reduce pest problems, and

irrigation systems to make watering easier. Getting close to a garden bed in a wheelchair may require raised tabletop-style gardens or stepped beds.

Vertical gardens, hanging gardens (with retractable hangers to vary the levels of the hanging baskets) and container gardens are also wheelchair friendly and very accessible to those with many types of disabilities.

Accessibility doesn't stop with a path and a raised bed or containers, however. For gardeners with disabilities to be able to work independently, they also need access to tools, water (hoses, taps and watering cans), compost and shade. It may be necessary to have a table or bench for activities such as repotting and propagation. Paths also need to be swept and lawns maintained by mowing and edging.

GRADUAL CHANGE

Retrofitting an ordinary suburban garden to be wheelchair accessible is expensive, but gradually changing a garden to make it safer and easier to manage is an option for people who intend to grow old in their gardens. Adaptations that can be made over time include upgrading surfaces so they are safer to walk on, adding handrails, including more seating and shaded level spaces, and simplifying maintenance with the construction of raised beds and transition to plants that need less upkeep.

Also consider upgrading tools and machinery. For example, a modern self-propelling lawn mower is much easier to use than a heavy push mower. There are also lightweight and easy-to-use tools that make gardening tasks such as pruning and digging more manageable.

RESOURCES

There are good online resources to help design a safe and accessible garden for gardeners who are ageing or have a disability. Contact your local council to find out about accessible community gardens in your neighbourhood. For hints and tips on disabled and therapeutic gardens, visit the following websites.

- Cultivate NSW offers links to articles, newsletters and other websites about horticultural therapy at cultivatensw.org.au
- Designwell Landscape Gardens

specialises in designing gardens for people with dementia and offers a free downloadable booklet titled *Gardens that Care* at designwell.net.au

- The Horticultural Therapy Association of Victoria offers downloadable information sheets on gardening with disabilities at horticulturaltherapy.com.au
- Thrive UK is a UK-based charity for gardeners with disabilities. It has a dedicated website for people who want to continue gardening despite disability at carryongardening.org.uk

The therapeutic benefits of just being in a garden are well known



Chooks in the chill

DESPITE THEIR WARM FEATHERS, LIKE US, CHICKENS CAN FEEL THE COLD IN THE WINTER MONTHS, WHICH MEANS A FEW CHANGES IN LIFESTYLE AND EGG PRODUCTION

Words Megg Miller

Brrr...! It might be getting cold, wet and windy, but we're lucky in Australia that our winters are not extreme. We don't need to close up henhouses to keep the snow out, nor do we need to run a heater to control condensation resulting from battening down any openings.

This doesn't mean any old housing will do, though; the cosier and happier the hens, the healthier and more productive they will be.

CABIN CRAZY

In inclement weather, accommodation needs to be spacious enough for the flock to be contented during periods of confinement. This is where distractions are a boon.

A biscuit (or section) of lucerne hay keeps most bored hens busy. Make them stretch for it by placing in a hanging netting sling or tie the hay with twine so it's harder to scratch apart.

A hanging grain bottle provides hours of engagement. Choose a clear plastic bottle, put some holes around the sides where they join the base for grain to fall out, half fill with wild bird mix and hang. The hens soon learn that if they peck, they will be rewarded with a few grains.

Of course, a bunch of greens tied up and secured to the wall encourages hours of pecking, as does half a cabbage in a hanging string bag.

There are lots more options for keeping them amused: pieces of pumpkin, clumps of grass with dirt adhering, or the latest — a children's xylophone attached to the wall so the birds can peck and make music.

DRAUGHT PROTECTION

Cold hens double their feed intake to maintain body warmth, so eliminate wind that's blowing in by installing a blind. This can be useful to stop rain from entering, too.

Look for second-hand blinds or match one to your house colour; cost shouldn't be exorbitant. Secure the blind so it doesn't flap or bang, frightening the flock.

Why not just attach a length of clear plastic? In a pinch, it's a handy solution, especially if rain is blowing in and wetting litter. However, plastic tends to reduce ventilation, leading to condensation and creating a damp environment. In addition, plastic tears easily and may not withstand strong winds.



Your chooks need protection from the elements in winter, too

A cheap household blind attached 30–40cm down from the roofline (so there is ample space for airflow) and secured is a better option and can also be used in summer to keep direct sun out.

HOT BREAKFAST

In winter, lots of people provide a warm mash made from soaked grains or a mix of bran, pollard, lucerne chaff and a protein supplement. Moistened pellets are also good. Only offer enough that can be eaten in 10–20 minutes — leftovers attract pest birds or get smelly.

Should you add spices? No. Fowls are not humans and ordinarily wouldn't consume stimulating spices. As well, there's a good chance the spices will dilute digestive juices and be deleterious to the mucosa lining the gastrointestinal tract.

Healthy, unstressed birds kept in clean and cosy accommodation and fed sensibly shouldn't need stimulating products.

NOT QUITE RIGHT

If the flock looks lacklustre, check for parasites. Less dust bathing in wet weather means lice can multiply. If present, treat with sulphur powder, neem powder or diatomaceous earth.

Red mite may be the culprit, so check at night on perches or walls for their presence: the above powders can be dusted or puffed onto them and boiling water poured into cracks and crevices where they congregate. Red mite seriously debilitate birds, even causing anaemia.

Outdoor ranging birds with access to damp or wet soil may carry a heavy worm burden. Worm eggs require moisture to complete their lifecycle, hence the likelihood of infection in range birds. Crushed garlic in water (one clove per three hens) for several days will reduce the burden.



FEATHERED FRIENDS | WINTER CARE

INDOOR BREEDS

Some breeds are best kept indoors on dry litter when it's wet and muddy, particularly those with feathered feet and crests and with muffs and a beard. Belgian d'Uccle, Faverolles, Houdan, Pekins, Polish, Silkies and even short-legged Japanese all benefit from a dry environment.

Mud-caked foot feathering and water-logged crests or beards can undermine health, so think ahead when setting up and include a small covered outdoor yard that stays dry and offers the opportunity for scratching and dust bathing. Breeds are not all the same; some are better suited to warm, northern conditions, while others thrive in cold climates. Research before selection will help ensure birds are matched to the right climatic areas.

DRESS FOR SAFETY

Some hens are notorious for staying out late and occasionally becoming so disoriented when darkness falls or fog or rain reduce visibility that they can't find their way back home to the chookhouse. When that happens, often a bush, any bush, is sought for overnight protection.

Tired of searching for these stragglers? Maybe they should be wearing hi-vis vests, which are easy to see by torchlight, even if the birds' plumage blends in with grass or bushes. Choose fluoro pink or yellow. The vest slips over the wings and sits securely on the bird's back, the bright colour standing out so chookie cannot become lost or overlooked.

TOO COLD TO LAY

Mature hens moult in autumn and take leave from laying during winter. People assume the absence of eggs is due to the cold, but it's not. It's related to insufficient daylight hours to trigger hormones that stimulate egg lay.

You can expect the combs of the old girls to start colouring up after the shortest day and eggs to appear again in early to mid-July.

Still no eggs? Ensure you're feeding a quality ration that contains at least 15 per cent protein. Egg lay depends on protein intake, but a balanced diet is also essential. And if you didn't check for ectoparasites, now is the time as they may be stressing birds and holding back egg lay.



1 Warm mash will be appreciated in the cold 2 Laying boxes should be sheltered from the elements 3 Walking around in mud is not the best thing for breeds like Silkies 4 Check for parasites



The latest chook house accessory

THERE ARE LOTS MORE OPTIONS FOR KEEPING THEM AMUSED: PIECES OF PUMPKIN, CLUMPS OF GRASS WITH DIRT ADHERING, OR THE LATEST — A CHILDREN'S XYLOPHONE ATTACHED TO THE WALL SO THE BIRDS CAN PECK AND MAKE MUSIC.



Give them pumpkin pieces to peck at

LETHARGIC LOVERS

Preposterous as it sounds, roosters from heavy breeds are renowned for being unwilling to mate when the temperature is low. This means a late breeding season in Victoria or Tasmania.

Short day length is detrimental and serious poultry breeders run a light in the henhouse to achieve 16 hours of combined day and electric light. This is the day length that initiates and maintains egg lay and fertility.

If you want to breed your flock early in the season, or just want to bring hens into lay, consider supplementing daylight with artificial light so the fowls' hormonal systems respond to what they perceive as increased day length.

TAKE IT EASY

Keep your poultry comfortable and contented with the suggestions we've made, but don't forget that they enjoy your company, too. Our feathered friends become quite fond of their owners! 🐔



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For stockists and more details, go to our website:

www.organigrow.com.au

10 TOP TIPS

CLEVER IDEAS FOR YOUR GARDEN

Words Erina Starkey

1 A WHOLE NEW WORLD
Terrariums are the ultimate low-maintenance houseplants. When made correctly, they are completely self-sufficient, using photosynthesis to recycle nutrients. Rather than spend money on a fish bowl, there are many other inspired glass vessels you can use. An old jar or glass coffee pot, for instance, makes a very cute and quirky terrarium, perfect for the kitchen windowsill.



2 GOOD GOURD
Not just for decoration, a gourd can also be used to make a birdhouse for the garden. To start, you need a fully cured gourd. This is achieved by allowing your gourd to dry out completely, either on the vine or on the verandah for three to six months. The gourd is ready when the outside is hard and the seeds rattle inside. Now, cut a circle into the gourd, large enough that native birds can easily climb in and out. Empty out the seeds and muck from within and clean thoroughly. Drill a few holes in the bottom for drainage and one in the top for hanging.

3 FOWL PLAY
If your chickens are cooped up for the day, there's plenty you can do to keep them happy-go-clucky. Stringing up some lettuce or cabbage is one way to make their mealtimes more fun while minimising food spoilage. You can also try making a homemade treat dispenser by filling up a water bottle with seeds and then puncturing it with holes. It won't take long for the chickens to catch on and start kicking it around. Not only do happy chickens lay more eggs, but they are also less likely to experience social problems, such as feather pecking and bullying.

4 STICK TO IT
Do you have a kitchen drawer filled with leftover packets of chopsticks? Never fear, there are many ways to put them to good use in the garden. Chopsticks make the perfect tools for moving delicate plants and objects in a terrarium, especially when there is a narrow opening at the top. They can also be used to make a garden stake for seedlings. String a few chopsticks together and you can even make a miniature trellis.

5 SEE THE LIGHT
Late autumn's cooler weather makes it the perfect time for growing lettuce. However, if you're using seed, you'll have your work cut out for you. Lettuce seeds are both extremely heat- and light-sensitive. There's no point planting lettuce seed in 30-degree temperatures as they simply won't sprout. To increase your chance of germination, soak the seeds in water for 16 hours or more under a light. When it comes time to sow, scatter your seeds on the surface of your soil then sift a fine veneer of potting mix over the top. This way they won't get lost.

6 ON THE MOVE
If you're planning on moving house and want to take a few mementos from the garden with you, now is a good time for moving plants. After the vigorous spring and summer season, growth will have begun to slow down and many plants will enter a dormant stage, meaning you can transplant them without too much stress or damage. Make sure you can handle the work before you start digging. Any plant taller than 1m will have a heavy root ball and will require at least two people to lift.

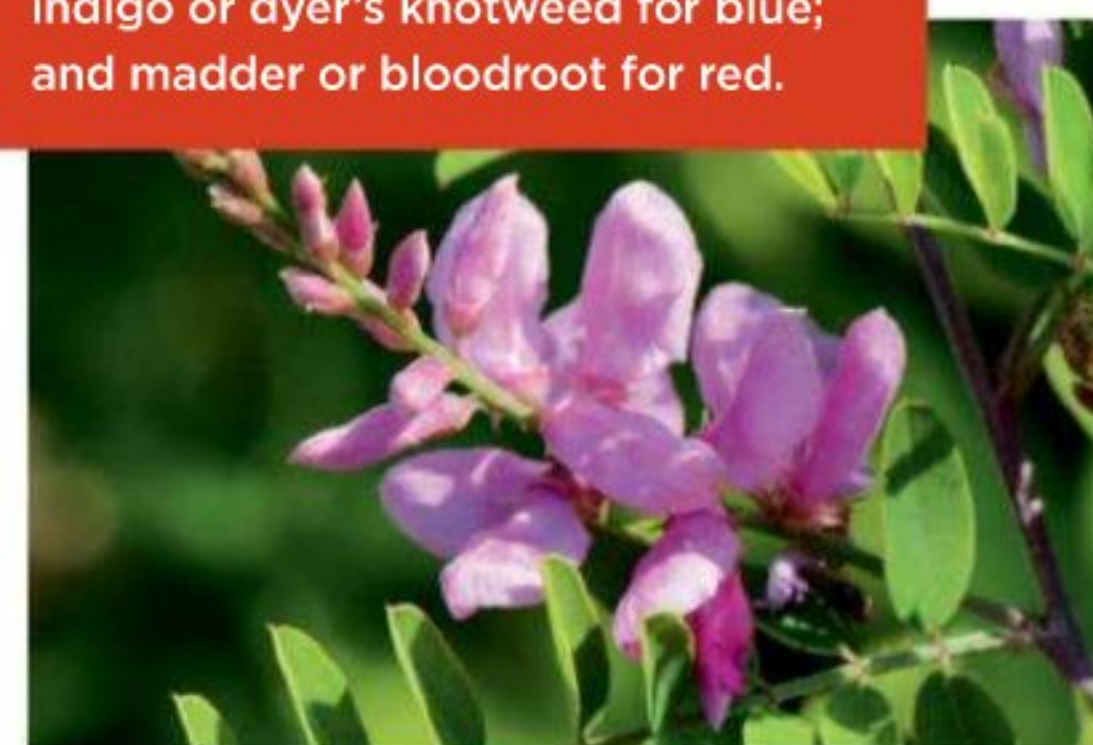


7 OUT OF THE GUTTER
Not convinced of the aesthetic beauty of a closed gutter downspout? Why not try a rain chain. Made from metal chain links or decorative cups, they help divert rainwater runoff from the roof to the ground. Follow in the Japanese tradition and add a stoneware pot to the bottom of the chain. Not only does this create a beautiful feature but you'll also have a catch basin to redistribute water to the garden.

8 JUST CHILL
If you are already up to your ears in homemade jams and preserves, freezing fruit is a great way to save the garden's bounty for the months ahead. While berries can be frozen as they are, fruits such as apples, apricots, cherries, figs, lychees, mangoes, melons, peaches, pears, plums and nectarines will need to be soaked in sugar syrup first. Make your own sugar syrup by boiling together sugar and water; the ratio will vary depending on how sweet or sour the natural fruit is. Dice the fruit first, then cover completely with sugar syrup and seal in freezer ware.

9 A HEAP OF MUSHROOMS
A compost heap filled with soggy autumn leaves makes the perfect growing medium for oyster mushrooms. Simply make a few small wells in the surface of your compost heap, about 15cm deep, and sprinkle with oyster mushroom spores. Cover with a layer of fallen leaves and water well. The mushrooms should start fruiting in three months time and, provided you continue to top up with fresh litter and water, can continue for years.

10 PERMACOUTURE
Complement your food growing this year by planting natural dyes in the garden to colour your textiles, yarn and clothing. Not only will you blend in wonderfully with the natural world, you'll also be doing your bit against toxic synthetic dye waste and its associated water pollution. While there are many different flowers and edibles that produce an abundance of colour, growing plants specifically in primary colours will allow you to blend a rainbow of hues. Try marigold, yarrow, weld, saffron or turmeric for yellow; cornflower, woad, indigo or dyer's knotweed for blue; and madder or bloodroot for red.



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Things to do in MAY

THE ARRIVAL OF MAY SIGNALS THAT THE CRISP DAYS OF AUTUMN HAVE COME AT LAST. ENJOY AUTUMNAL COLOUR AND MAKE THE MOST OF WHAT THE SEASON HAS TO OFFER.

By Jennifer Stackhouse

1

COOL & TEMPERATE



VEGIES

If you are still harvesting pumpkins, pick them with a piece of stem intact to improve storage. For good keeping, store them in a cool, dry spot. Harvest the last of the tomatoes as well. Also collect seeds from spent summer and early autumn crops, then clear away all old growth and remove old stakes. Store seed in a cool, dry spot and make sure each seed packet is clearly labelled with its name and date.

To prepare the garden for new plantings, fork in compost to revive beds. If the beds are not being replanted, cover them with a layer of organic mulch or sow with a green manure crop to enrich the soil through winter. Dig these green manure crops back into the soil before the plants flower and set seed.

Sow seed of broccoli, garlic, kale, lettuce, onion, radish, rocket, parsley, silver beet and spinach now for late winter and spring harvests. In frost-free areas, also sow peas and broad beans. Although all grow well from seed, plant out seedlings now to give crops while seeds are germinating and growing.



FRUIT

Late autumn is the time to gather nuts, including chestnut, macadamia and hazelnut. There are still apples to pick in cool zones, but most deciduous trees are entering their winter dormancy. Dispose of fallen leaves and fruit, especially any with diseases such as brown rot. Sound fruit can be picked up and juiced. Allow the chickens to clean up under the trees as well as get rid of overwintering pests, like codling moth.

Begin to harvest citrus now. Pick mandarins before they become puffy, but grapefruit, lemons, tangelos and oranges can be stored on the tree and picked as needed. Also ready to harvest are kiwifruit, persimmons and tamarillos. Old varieties of persimmon need to be soft and fully ripe before picking, but many Japanese varieties are tasty while still crisp.

Prepare for planting deciduous fruit trees, shrubs and vines, which will be available in the months ahead, by clearing space, removing weeds and covering the ground with mulch.



COMPOST & SOIL

Although the leaves have been falling for a few months, May is a time of abundance. Don't waste this free source of nutrients. Protect ponds or water features from fallen leaves with a temporary cover stretched over the water. Rake up leaves from lawns and paths and remove leaves that build up in and on hedges. Add leaves to the compost heap, or shred them with the lawn mower or mulching machine to use as instant mulch. Bag up those you can't use or pile them into a leaf bin where they'll break down slowly into leaf mould. If the leaves are dry, moisten them as they are fed into the leaf bin or the compost.

Make the most of the cooler and slower growing conditions to clean up. Remove weeds from garden beds and new planting areas, taking care not to spread seeds or bulbs. Dig up all roots and runners. Cover fallow beds in the vegie patch with mulch (use those leaves gathered from deciduous trees) or plant a green manure crop such as clover or another legume, which enriches the soil with nitrogen.

TROPICAL



VEGIES

With the heat and humidity of summer and the wet season over for now, it's time to plant for the dry months ahead. Crops that are tricky to grow in summer's humidity can be planted now, including beetroot, kale, onion, parsnip and spinach. Look for heat-tolerant varieties or provide shade where the afternoon sun is still hot.

This is also a good time to get in a crop of potatoes and to plant more beans, lettuce and tomatoes. Use any spare space in the veggie patch to sow greens to feed to the chickens.

The dry season is also a good time to stock up on herbs. Set up a potted herb garden and plant a range of herbs. Cut down old galangal, ginger and turmeric stems to make way for new growth. Harvest the roots to use in cooking or to add flavour to juices.



FRUIT

This is the time to both harvest and plant. Harvest ripe avocados, custard apples, mandarins and other citrus. Macadamias are also ready now. Rigorously pick up all fallen fruits to reduce pest and disease problems. Prepare for planting new fruit trees, such as tropical varieties of peach or grapes, by clearing a sunny, sheltered area and digging in compost or other organic matter. Also plant strawberries and blueberries now.

As the soil dries, keep the water flowing to fruit trees, particularly new plantings or those flowering or forming new fruit. Protect ripening crops. Birds and bats are likely to target them, often stealing the crop just before it's ready to harvest. Use bird-safe netting or exclusion bags or, for a longer-term solution, build a netted or wire structure. Always check netted trees regularly to release any trapped animals.



COMPOST & SOIL

Be liberal with compost, spreading it around the garden as mulch as well as digging it into the soil to help sustain new plantings. Building up humus in soils helps them retain moisture and nutrients and improves the numbers of soil-borne microbes that help keep plants healthy. A layer of mulch or compost helps conserve soil moisture over the drier months ahead. Compost can also be incorporated into potting mixes, and fine, sieved compost can be used as a medium to raise seeds.

If the compost heap is dry, lightly water it. Also moisten materials as they are added to the heap. Where materials are slow to break down, add more air by digging and turning the heap. Adding a sprinkle of garden lime or a layer of green, leafy material such as lawn clippings or comfrey leaves can also help boost composting activity.

1 Use leaves from deciduous trees for mulch 2 When harvesting pumpkins leave some stalk on 3 Late autumn is time to gather chestnuts and other nuts 4 Plant strawberries in tropical zones 5 There are still apples to pick in cool zones



Things to do in JUNE

THE COOL SUNNY DAYS OF EARLY WINTER ARE A GREAT TIME TO BEGIN PROJECTS AND TO PLANT DORMANT TREES, SHRUBS AND PERENNIALS.

By Jennifer Stackhouse

1

COOL & TEMPERATE



VEGIES

Plant dormant asparagus, artichoke and rhubarb crowns into beds enriched with compost or aged manure. All are long-lived, producing reliably for years. If these crops are already in the vegie garden, cover with a mulch of manure and compost to feed the spring harvest.

Also plant broad beans, garlic, lettuce, peas, shallots and spinach. Stagger lettuce and spinach to avoid a glut by planting new seedlings or sowing seeds every three to four weeks. Help pea seedlings reach their climbing support by using twigs to allow them to climb onto trellises or stakes.

Regularly inspect brassicas (including cabbages and broccoli) for snails, slugs and caterpillars. The green caterpillars of the cabbage white butterfly are especially damaging to many winter crops, in particular new plantings. Keep them in check by hand-picking caterpillars daily. Alternatively, spray with Dipel (an organic spray) when pests are observed. Liquid-feed leafy winter crops such as silver beet, spinach, lettuce, coriander and rocket. Apply liquid organic fertiliser every 7-10 days.



FRUIT

Where heavy crops are weighing down citrus branches, thin fruit and support branches with props. Also winter-spray foliage with horticultural oil to target immature forms of bugs such as bronze orange bug.

Bare-rooted deciduous fruit trees are available now. Many need cross-pollination for successful cropping, so it's important to plant the necessary pollinator. Compatible pollinators are needed for most apple, pear, plum and cherry varieties and many others. If harvests have been low or non-existent on established trees in the orchard, fruit set may be improved by adding a pollinating variety. Where space is at a premium, look for multi-grafted trees that include a pollinator. Also consider installing a beehive to improve pollination. Find out about beekeeping courses in your area at TAFE or through a local beekeeping group, and check local council bylaws.

Also spray deciduous fruit trees such as plums with a copper-based spray before growth resumes. Prune grapes and kiwifruit after harvest.



COMPOST & SOIL

Where the winter ahead is cold and wet, compost heaps can be covered to keep them from becoming soggy, cold and inactive. Continue to rake and bag fallen leaves or add them to the compost heap, layering dry leaves with green material such as weeds, kitchen scraps and fresh manure. Also turn and aerate heaps regularly to keep them composting despite the colder temperatures.

Expect vermin to seek out winter quarters in compost heaps or beneath earth floors in the chook shed. These pests are difficult to deter. Reduce breeding sites and food and make access hard. For example, laying a cement floor in the chook run and storing food in lidded bins can help reduce numbers. Restrict vermin entry to compost heaps by using wire barriers in the soil around the base of the heap.

Move worm farms into a warmer area to keep worms comfortable during winter. Very cold winter temperatures can kill them.

Keep ahead of weeds by lightly hoeing among rows of winter vegies or in fallow beds.

TROPICAL



VEGIES

Continue to water all vegetables, especially where conditions are dry or plants are grown in containers or raised garden beds. Use a liquid feed to keep plants growing. Apply every 7-10 days. Spending even a few minutes each day in the vegie patch reduces potential problems. Visit the vegetable area to look for pests, including caterpillars. Squash pests to stop them eating crops. Remove diseased leaves and harvest crops that are ready to use.

Keep planting. Peas provide a fast harvest in winter. Root vegetables including carrot, radish and beetroot can also be planted now. For fast-maturing root crops, choose baby forms such as baby beets and carrots, which are also good options for container growing. Also plant cabbage, corn, squash and zucchini. Plant corn in blocks as this aids fertilisation of the cobs. In inland areas, protect susceptible vegies such as capsicums and tomatoes from frost.



FRUIT

Harvest citrus as needed, keeping plants deeply watered and well mulched. Where space is tight, grow dwarf varieties. Most dwarf trees are grafted onto dwarfing rootstock to reduce plant size without reducing the size of the fruit. (See [page 22](#).)

Combat pests and diseases by pruning, clearing and spraying. Prune grapes and clear up around fruit trees, removing fallen leaves and diseased fruit. Prevent black spot on pawpaw with regular doses of liquid seaweed to strengthen cells. Treat trees with copper spray after harvest.

Mow weeds around fruit trees and remove invasive grasses, especially around trunks. Cover cleared areas with organic mulch. This is an ideal time to clean out the hen house and spread soiled straw under fruit trees.

This is also a good time to build permanent structures around fruit trees to prevent birds attacking crops.



COMPOST & SOIL

Turn compost heaps and add extra moisture if the heap is dry. Continue to build healthy heaps by adding a balance of wet and dry materials, such as vegetable scraps and lawn clippings layered with dry leaves and chopped, disease-free garden prunings.

Deter weeds in bare soils and among the vegetables by undertaking regular hoeing and applying mulches. As well as deterring weeds, and even without digging, a mulch layer can improve the soil beneath making it easier to dig and better for plant roots to establish.

In fire-prone areas, however, scrape away organic mulches and replace with gravel or recycled inorganic mulch for protection against spot fires.

Where soils are very dry and difficult to wet due to root competition from surrounding trees, consider erecting raised beds for vegetable crops. Line the base with a weed mat or geotextile fabric to exclude invasive roots.

1 Consider installing a beehive in the orchard 2 Thin citrus where branches are weighed down 3 These seedlings will need temporary support 4 Move the worm farm to a warmer area 5 Bare-rooted fruit trees are available now



Plait that!

GARLIC BRAIDS AND ONION STRINGS ARE WONDERFUL WAYS TO PRESERVE AND DISPLAY YOUR HOMEGROWN HARVEST



Photos GAP Photos/Jonathan Need

Braiding, or plaiting, garlic and onions is a beautiful way to have your homegrown produce on show for all to see. But it also has practical benefits, providing better air circulation around your bulbs than they would get stored in a bin. This keeps them fresher for longer. Hang them where they can be admired and easily accessed for cooking.

ONION STRING

You'll need about 1m length of strong string or twine. If it's too light, it will break from the weight of the onions. Snip off any roots and clean off any dirt and papery bits from your onions. Trim the stems to 15cm (you can trim off any excess as you go).

Make sure your onions are properly cured and completely dry. The number of onions depends on their size and weight. Check the weight as you go and make sure it doesn't get too heavy for you to easily carry.

Tie the ends of the string together and hang from a hook, door handle or anything that will hold a little weight and allow you to work freely. Once you start adding onions, the string will have an annoying habit of twirling. To stop this happening, a clothes peg will hold the two sides steady.



1 Hang your string and tie the 1st onion's stem in. It's the only one you need to tie.



2 Take a 2nd onion and push its stem through the string loop.



3 Weave in the 2nd onion by taking the stem around and back through the string loop.



4 Take the stem around and back through in the other direction then push the woven stem down gently.



5 The 2nd onion is in place on the string loop.



6 Weave in the 3rd onion in the same way and continue until all are woven in. The weight of each onion will help to hold the others in place.



7 Front view of onion string.



8 Back view.



9 Finished onion strings.



THE SHED | STORING GARLIC & ONIONS

GARLIC BRAID

For each garlic braid, you'll need 12 bulbs as well as some scissors and string. Leave as much stem as you can, trim off roots and make sure the bulbs are clean and completely dry.



1 Remove roots before braiding.



2 Remove soil and outer leaves before braiding.



3 Lay your 3 biggest bulbs, stems pointing left, right and centre, as shown, and add a 4th, stem pointing down the centre



4 Take the stem pointing to the right and braid it over to the left



5 Add a 5th bulb, its stem and the bottom right-pointing stem now becoming the centre stems.



6 Take the top left-pointing stem and braid to the centre so you now have 2 stems pointing left, 2 right and 1 centre.



7 Add a 6th bulb, stem pointing in the centre so that there are now 2 stems pointing in each direction.



8 Take the 2 right-pointing stems and braid them over to the centre.



9 Add a 7th, stem pointing to centre. Continue thus, with each new bulb's stem pointing to centre, until all 12 are braided.



10 Once all are in keep braiding the stems like you would plait hair.



11 Tie the ends securely together with string, ready to hang.



12 The finished braids.

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Did you know?

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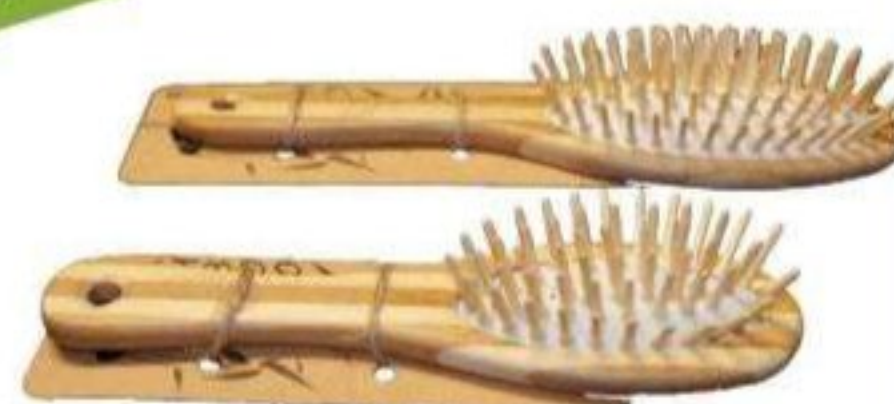
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back to nature

WHEN CONVENTIONAL AGRICULTURE LED TO
LOWER PRODUCTIVITY AND POOR SOIL, THIS
FARMING FAMILY MADE SOME SIMPLE, SUSTAINABLE
CHANGES, WITH IMPRESSIVE RESULTS

Words & photos Centre for Organic Research & Education (CORE)

Joe and Karen Bugeja have been vegetable farming in Western Sydney since 1989 and their family have been farming the same land since the 1970s. The farms are situated along Bents Basin Road, Wallacia, NSW, on the banks of the Nepean River, from which irrigation water is sourced.

The Bugejas grow a wide range of vegetables, including cabbages, leeks, radishes, garlic, lettuce and pumpkins, and most of their produce is distributed through Sydney Markets where they have held a stall for many years.

Since the 1970s, the Bugejas have used conventional farming methods, including intensive cultivation, overhead irrigation, chemical fertilisers recommended by agronomists, pesticides, fungicides and manures. Over time, they adjusted their farm management practices to maximise farm output. However, gradually they noticed a decline in productivity and an increase in pests and diseases that led to increasing plant mortalities.

Further investigation by the Department of Primary Industries identified in their soils a lack of organic matter and imbalances in plant nutrients with virtually no evident biological activity. With increasing costs and diminishing returns, the Bugejas seriously considered walking away from farming.

TRIAL WITH RECYCLED ORGANIC MULCH

In late 2011, Joe and Karen were introduced to the Sustainable Amendments for Agriculture (SAFA) Program conducted by the Centre for Organic Research & Education (CORE). This program provided them with affordable mulch materials and advice on how to integrate these materials into their farming system.

Following a period of successful initial trials, the Bugejas converted their entire farms over to using surface-applied mulch that's incorporated into the soil after each crop is harvested.

Early results showed gradual reduction in chemical usage with corresponding benefits — less water (with corresponding less energy used), fewer chemicals, better yields, fewer mortalities, less run-off into the nearby river, less tilling effort required (saving fuel), and less plant stress in hot summers.



Joe Bugeja





1 Healthy plants from healthy soil 2 Joe and Karen's kids had never seen worms in the soil until the change 3 Pumpkin, an important crop

REDUCTION RATES BY MID-2014

INPUT	% SAVING
Fertiliser	95%
Water	50%
Fungicide	50%
Insecticide	50%
Weedicide	—
Fuel saving from less tilling	20%
Electricity saving from less irrigation	50%



FULL INTEGRATION INTO FARMING SYSTEM

Following the trial, Joe and Karen converted to using recycled organic mulches and seaweed soil conditioners on all crops. The result has been a total transformation in the viability of the farming enterprise and the quality of the produce.

One additional observation by Joe and Karen's children has been the identification of worms in the soil that had not previously been found on the farm since its establishment. Joe believes the worms have helped "cultivate" the soil, which has resulted in easier tilling, and less often, saving on expensive tractor fuel.

Areas that have been mulched

ONE ADDITIONAL OBSERVATION BY JOE AND KAREN'S CHILDREN HAS BEEN THE IDENTIFICATION OF WORMS IN THE SOIL THAT HAD NOT PREVIOUSLY BEEN FOUND ON THE FARM SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT.

previously are then tilled to incorporate the decomposed organic matter into the top-soil horizon. This process has not only reduced weed growth but also assisted in moisture retention and reduced soil temperature fluctuations.

"In addition to weed eradication, the system has significantly improved our soil health, increased yields and dramatically reduced our chemical input costs, particularly with the issues

around chemical herbicides at the moment," says Joe.

The SAFA program is now helping nearly 100 farms along the Hawkesbury-Nepean River Catchment achieve the same results as Joe and Karen have, while reducing the impacts on the river system.

For more information about the SAFA program and other CORE activities visit core.asn.au



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In season MAY

FRUITS

Apples, avocado, banana, cumquat, custard apple, dates, feijoa, grapes, kiwifruit, lemon, lime, mandarin, nashi, nuts (chestnuts, hazelnuts, peanuts, walnuts), orange (Navel), pears, persimmon, pomegranate, quince, rhubarb

VEGIES

Asian greens, beetroot, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, celeriac, celery, daikon, eggplant, eschalot, fennel, garlic, ginger, horseradish, kale, leek, lettuce, mushrooms, okra, olives, onion, spring onion, parsnip, peas, potato, pumpkin, silverbeet, spinach, squash, swede, sweet corn, sweet potato (kumara), taro, tomatoes, turnip, witlof, zucchini

In season JUNE

FRUITS

Apples, avocado, banana, custard apple, dates, grapefruit, kiwifruit, lemon, lime, mandarin, nashi, nuts (chestnuts, hazelnuts, walnuts), orange (Navel), passionfruit, pears, persimmon, pomelo, quince, rhubarb

VEGIES

Asian greens, beetroot, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, celeriac, celery, eschalot, fennel, garlic, ginger, horseradish, Jerusalem artichoke, kale, kohlrabi, leek, mushrooms, okra, olives, onion, parsnip, peas, potato, pumpkin, silverbeet, spinach, swede, sweet potato (kumara), turnip, witlof

SEASONAL TIP

What could be a better winter dessert than warming spiced pears poached in red wine? Heat $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups of red wine, a tablespoon of sugar (to taste), 1 star anise, 1 cinnamon stick and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of vanilla in a small saucepan until the sugar has dissolved. Add the pears and simmer gently, turning occasionally, until tender, about an hour.



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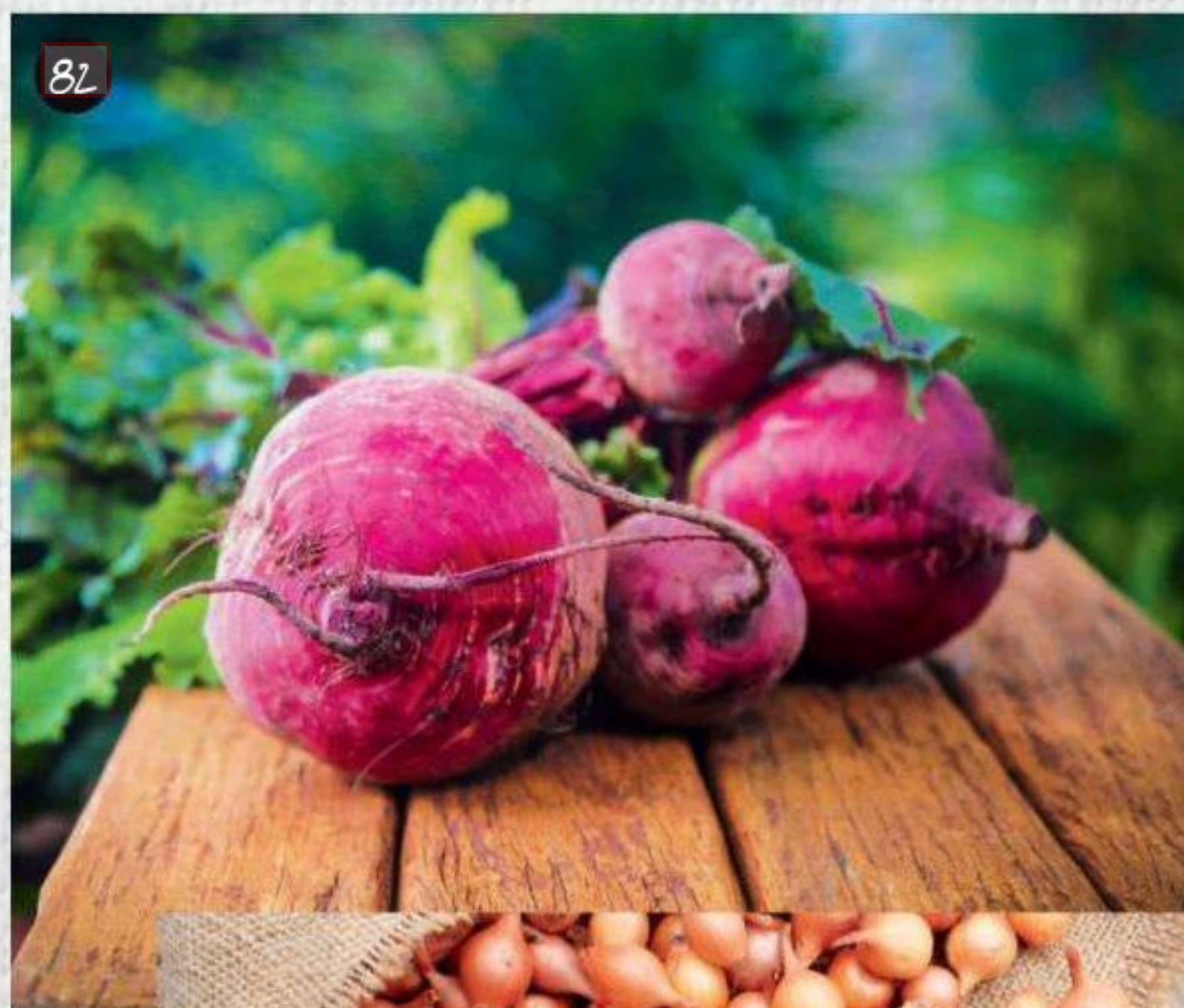


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Garden to table

Preserving the harvest

SEASONAL RECIPES TO MAKE NOW

81 **ORANGES** Arancello

82 **BEETROOT** Easy Beetroot Relish

83 **QUINCES** Quince Paste

84 **ONIONS** Classic Pickled Onions

Arancello

A VARIATION ON THE SOUTHERN ITALIAN FAVOURITE LIMONCELLO, THIS REFRESHING LIQUEUR CAN ALSO BE MADE WITH MANDARINS (MANDARINO). ENJOY OVER ICE OR WITH A SPLASH OF BUBBLY

INGREDIENTS

- 1 bottle (750mL) vodka or neutral spirit, as high a proof as you can find*
- 6-8 oranges, depending on size
- 4 cups water
- 2 cups sugar

METHOD

- 1 Using a vegetable peeler, peel off the outer skin of the oranges, being careful not to include the bitter white pith.
- 2 Place the orange peels in clean glass jars and pour the vodka over. Cover and store for at least a week in a cool, dark place.
- 3 When ready to make the arancello,

bring the water to a simmer over a gentle heat. Add sugar and stir until completely dissolved. Remove from heat and let cool completely to avoid cloudiness.

- 4 Strain the peels out of the alcohol and mix in the sugar syrup.

- 5 Decant into clean glass bottles. Can be stored in the freezer as the alcohol will keep it from freezing.

* The stronger the alcohol, the more it will draw out the citrus oils.

Tip: Substitute equal parts of any citrus fruit for the oranges. You can also add spices such as a cinnamon stick, cardamom pods and a split vanilla bean.



Easy Beetroot Relish

THIS RELISH GOES WELL WITH COLD MEAT, ON SANDWICHES AND BURGERS OR WITH SMOKED OR COOKED SALMON. IT'S ALSO GOOD ON A CHEESE PLATTER

INGREDIENTS

- 1 red onion, finely chopped
- 1 apple, finely chopped
- 1 cup apple-cider vinegar*
- ½ cup water
- ¼ tsp allspice
- ¼ tsp ground cloves
- ¼ cup rapadura or coconut sugar
- ½ tsp sea salt
- About 500g beetroots, peeled & cooked

METHOD

- 1 Place all ingredients except beetroot in a saucepan. Bring to the boil over high heat, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Reduce heat and simmer for 10 minutes

until the apple and onion are tender.

- 2 Meanwhile, coarsely grate or finely chop the beetroots.
- 3 Add the grated beetroot to the saucepan and simmer on low heat for a further 30-45 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the liquid has reduced and it has a jammy, relish consistency.
- 4 Spoon into sterilised jars, seal and refrigerate.

* You can use white wine vinegar. You can also reduce or increase the sugar, to taste, or use another sweetener such as rice-malt syrup.



Quince Paste

KNOWN AS MEMBRILLO, QUINCE PASTE IS ENJOYED WITH A CHEESE PLATE. IT GOES WELL WITH MANCHEGO, A SPANISH CHEESE. ALTHOUGH IT SEEMS LIKE A SHOCKING AMOUNT OF SUGAR, IT'S ONLY EATEN IN TINY QUANTITIES

INGREDIENTS

- About 1.5kg quinces, peeled, cored & chopped
- 2 strips lemon peel
- Split vanilla pod
- Water
- 1kg sugar

METHOD

- 1 Place the chopped quince, lemon peel and vanilla pod in saucepan and add water to cover. Boil, covered, for about 30 mins or until very soft.
- 2 Discard vanilla pod and process the quince mixture until very smooth.
- 3 Measure (in cups) the cooked quince and return to the saucepan. Add an equal amount of sugar.
- 4 Cook over a low heat until the sugar has dissolved. Continue to cook on very low for 1.5-2 hours, stirring often, until very thick and a deep ruby colour. It's thick enough when it comes away from the sides of the saucepan when stirred.
- 5 Transfer to a greased and lined tin or individual ramekins.
- 6 Place in the oven with only the fan working for several hours to dry out. Alternatively, dry it in a very low oven (90°C) for several hours or in a gas oven with only the pilot light on.
- 7 Once set, place in an air-tight container and keep refrigerated.



Classic Pickled Onions

IF YOU'VE EVER BEEN PREGNANT, YOU MIGHT HAVE DEVELOPED A TASTE FOR THESE. GREAT ON AN ANTIPASTO OR CHEESE PLATTER

INGREDIENTS

- ¼ cup salt
- 1kg small pickling onions, peeled and left whole
- 4 bay leaves
- 4 cups apple-cider vinegar*
- ¼ cup sugar
- 2 tsp peppercorns
- 2 tsp mustard seeds
- 2 tsp coriander seeds
- 1 tsp whole cloves

METHOD

- 1 Dissolve the salt in 1L of water in a large bowl. Add whole peeled onions, cover and leave at room temperature overnight.
- 2 Drain the onions and rinse in cold water. Pack into sterilised jars along with bay leaves.
- 3 Add vinegar, sugar and spices to a saucepan and cook on low heat until sugar has dissolved. Bring to the boil then simmer gently for 20 mins.
- 4 Allow the liquid to cool, then pour over the onions, covering them completely.
- 5 Seal the jars and allow to stand in a cool place for a few weeks before using. Refrigerate after opening.

* You can use a vinegar of your choice but for any type of pickling the vinegar should be at least 5 per cent acidity.



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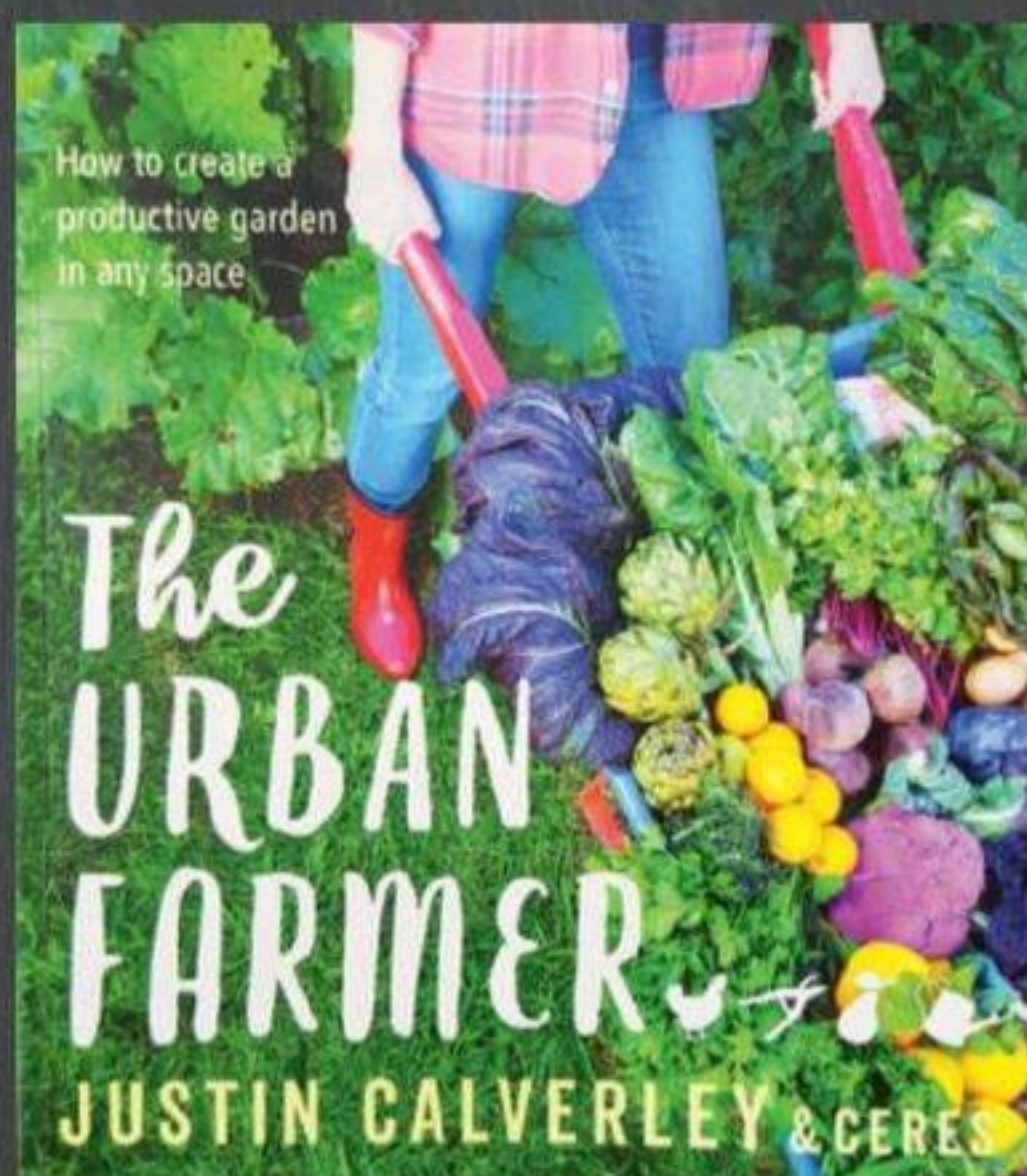
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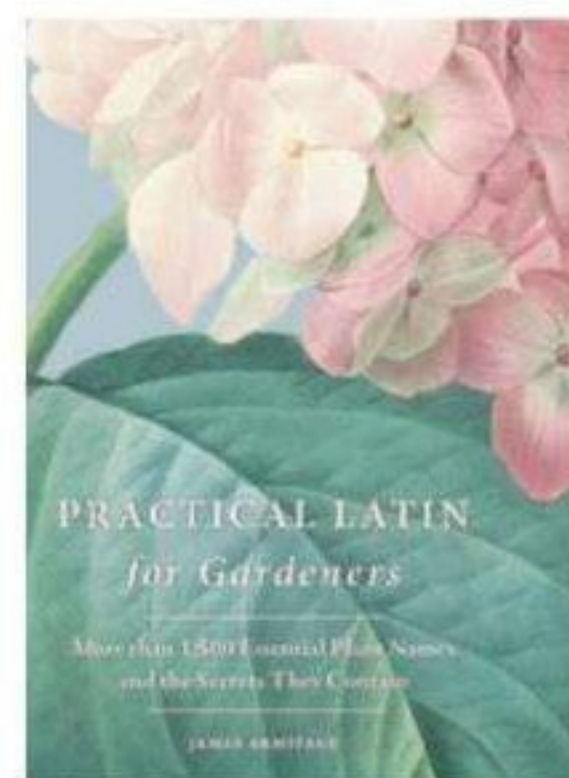
Sometimes, the only thing between a would-be city farmer and that dream garden is space. That's no longer an excuse as horticulturist and broadcaster Justin Calverley, who teaches at CERES Environment Park in urban Melbourne, draws on his knowledge of organics and permaculture to show how you can produce your own fruit, vegies, herbs, eggs and honey on a suburban block — even in a courtyard or on a balcony. This lavishly illustrated guide tells you all you need to know, from understanding soil to tackling pests and weeds organically. Justin's starting point was "How does nature do it?" From there, his aim has been to mimic nature and "release the shackles of product- and chemical-based gardening". Read all about it.



FLOWERSMITH

By Jennifer Tran, Hardie Grant, \$40

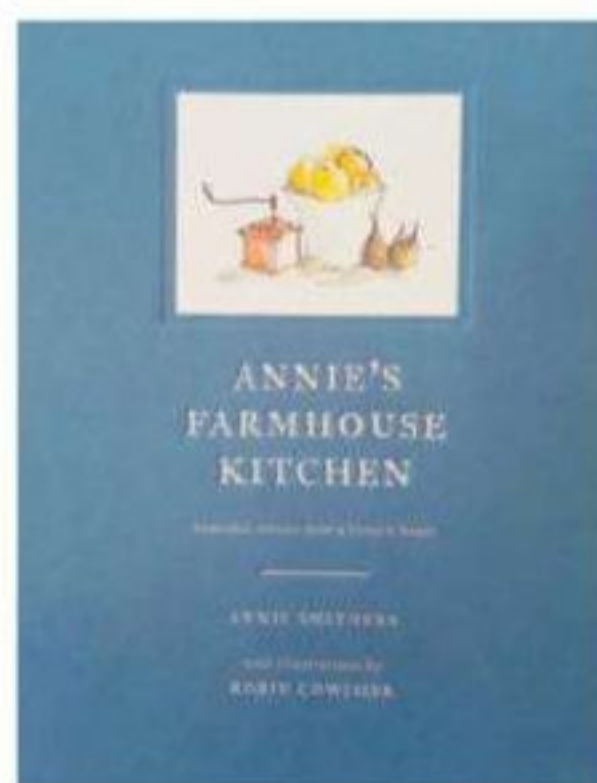
Once your garden is given over to fruit and veg (see left) you'll need to get your flowers from somewhere. Be your own florist with *Flowersmith*, which is all about handcrafting paper flowers — breathtakingly realistic ones — of rare, colourful beauty. As art director Richard Aloisio confesses in his foreword, he can't look at Jennifer Tran's work for too long: "It's just too gorgeous." In fact, it's hard to believe these blooms aren't real but the result of skilled work with scissors and toothpicks. Tran takes you through materials, supplies and templates, and offers hints on arranging your handiwork which, she points out, unlike actual flowers, will last forever.



PRACTICAL LATIN FOR GARDENERS

By James Armitage, Allen & Unwin, \$24.99

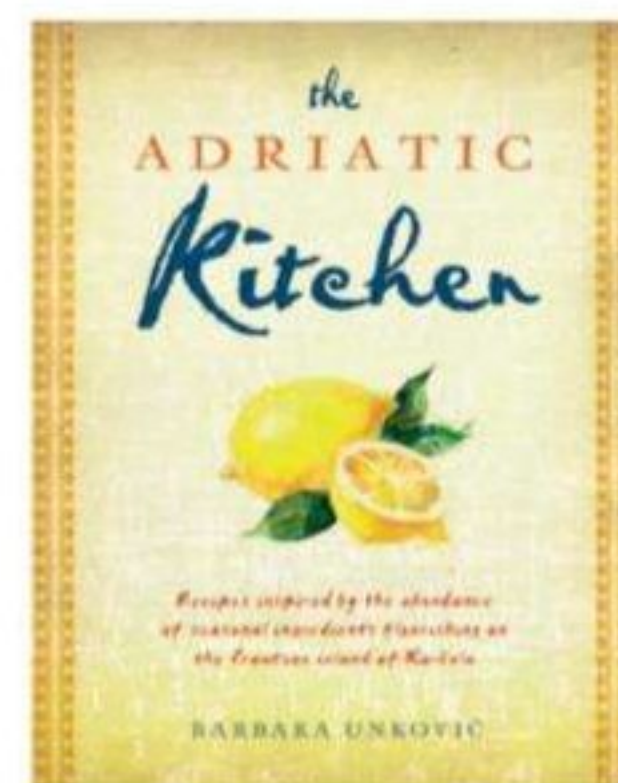
For this writer, a Latin education has proved invaluable for deciphering those tricky descriptors attached to every plant and animal species since botanist Carl Linnaeus began organising the naming system back in the 18th century. Knowing Latin tells me that any plant tagged *albiflorus* has white flowers and that *Impatiens noli-tangere* shouldn't be touched. This attractive book, illustrated with watercolours, works through 1500-odd plant names, explaining each and providing a pronunciation guide. If you find Latin a bit daunting, just be grateful the organisation of the species wasn't done in Arabic.



ANNIE'S FARMHOUSE KITCHEN

By Annie Smithers, Hardie Grant, \$40

Most successful restaurateurs are also amusing raconteurs, but have you noticed how many are also gifted writers? It probably helps if, like Annie Smithers, your mother was an English teacher and a fine cook in her own right and you cut your teeth on the works of Julia Child and Alice Waters. Of course, the subject here isn't literature but classic French provincial cuisine, which Smithers presents in a no-fuss, accessible style. If it's your deep desire to master basics such as stocks, pastry or potatoes in roasted duck fat, or to achieve the perfect roasted suckling pig or steak tartare, you could have no better mentor at your elbow than Annie Smithers.



THE ADRIATIC KITCHEN

By Barbara Unković, Exisle, \$14.99

If you've never investigated Croatian cuisine, here's your chance. New Zealand-born writer and restaurateur Barbara Unković has penned a love letter to the food of her father's homeland, where she herself lived for seven years, on the island of Korčula. It features Mediterranean staples like figs, pomegranate and risotto with surprising variations like Croatian Sweet Easter Bread (basted in limoncello), carrot and mint salad and Dalmatian Shepherd's Lamb with potatoes and broad beans. In a nice touch, the pages come complete with fake grease marks so you never have to worry about getting down and dirty in the kitchen.

PICK OF THE CROP

Our selection of products and services for gardeners and cooks



DISCOVER MOORPARK APRICOT — “THE VELVET FRUIT”

Prunus armeniaca is Latin for apricot, which suggests this gorgeous little orb of golden deliciousness has its roots in Armenia, although no one really knows where or when it originated. However, it's true that in Armenia apricots are abundant — you can even buy dried apricot garlands — a legacy of the silk dealers who took them to Iran BCE. These days, there are many varieties available ranging in size, flavour and colour, but if you are looking for the best, try Moorpark. Bred in the 18th century by Lord Anson at Moor Park in Hertfordshire (he also bred the first commercial strawberries), the Moorpark is lush, full of flavour and best eaten straight from the tree. You won't find Moorpark commercially as it won't transport or store for long periods. But in the home garden it doesn't get much better than Moorpark. Moorpark apricots are self-pollinating and super rich in vitamins and antioxidants. The tree itself is hardy and beautiful with heart-shaped foliage and pink-white spring blossoms that give way to large, golden-yellow fruits in summer. So if you are planning a bumper crop of apricots at your place, visit www.flemings.com.au/potc/potc.asp

MOTHER NATURE'S SOAP

“Have you ever wondered what your laundry detergent or shampoo is doing to the environment after it goes down your drain? You don't need to look hard to find reports of environmental damage from household chemicals, but I was worried about these products even before they went down the drain. My mum who, like her mum, died too young from cancer, had always warned me never to touch laundry powder because it's carcinogenic. She was right and I was careful — but I'm not any more. I discovered a laundry detergent that literally falls off a tree, does a better job than the powder I was using and is actually good for the environment. It didn't take long to find that this 'detergent' (soap nuts) made my windows shiny, cleaned my floors and cleaned my kids from head to toe — even keeping head lice away. I'm so proud to be able to share soap nuts with many other people through our home business, go green at home.” — Lee-Ann Wilson, gogreenathome.com.au



GOODBYE TO THE HEAT

“The long hot summer certainly was a scorcher! I was able to take refuge in my house, which I built many years ago with a passive solar design and plenty of thermal mass provided by sandstone and brick with lots of insulation all round, so even in the hottest weather it stays nice and cool inside. However, for my feathered friends it's a different matter. Even with lots of roof sprinklers on the eco-shelters, most of the chooks take refuge under the numerous shady trees I have on the farm, but when temperatures reach the high 40s, even with the cooling effect of the trees it can be too much. A few didn't survive and many went off the lay, but not like the poor birds in massive sheds on so-called free-range farms where many thousands can die from overheating. I urge readers who haven't already become part of the renewable revolution to install solar panels and put the coal-fired power stations out to pasture. It's only by people power that we will prevent dangerous climate change. On a brighter note, we were blessed with a prodigious crop of mangoes this year and the chooks certainly had a great time feasting on them!” — Simon, organigrow.com.au

PICK OF THE CROP



THE LEADING EDGE

When you first think of stunning outdoor areas, an assortment of plants and pavers may come to mind; garden edging is rarely at the top of the list. You'll be surprised to know just how much clean borders and raised garden beds can set your landscape apart from the average. FormBoss™ Metal Garden Edging has been supplying designers, landscapers and weekend DIYers all over Australia for almost 10 years now. What sets FormBoss™ apart is the fact that you can produce straight lines, curves and garden beds onsite with unprecedented ease, needing little to no experience. Having the rolled top lip makes the edging completely safe as well as allowing you to connect with ease. Anchoring the edging into the ground will completely conceal all fixings. Eight heights available ranging from 75mm to 580mm in both ZAM and Corten Steel. For more information, visit formboss.com.au

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At Ecobotanica, Linda Brennan runs the most delicious and inspirational classes for lovers of organic gardens and food. Join a class to experience the delights of growing your own thriving veggie garden and the joy of cooking fresh, life-giving food, or find out how to care for stingless bees, fruit trees or culinary and medicinal herbs. The classes always start with something tasty, harvested that morning from the sumptuous gardens. Classes are practical and hands-on with organic products to try and buy. Linda is a consummate educator, focused on your learning and helping you realise the organic garden of your dreams. Whether it's a balcony, a healing garden or a small patch of edibles, you'll be hooked on success when you learn from the professional. Find out about the wonderful classes coming up this year from Ecobotanica in South East Queensland and, while there, check out Linda's garden tips, recipes and videos. Ecobotanica.com.au



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Bellamy's Toddler Milk Drink is a nutritious supplement to the broadening diet of busy toddlers! Made from certified organic cow's milk, it now also has GOS (galacto-oligosaccharide), a prebiotic that is naturally present in breastmilk. For more information, bellamysorganic.com.au

EARTHLIFE PRODUCTS TESTIMONIAL FROM TOOWOOMBA GRAND CHAMPION

"I started using Lawn Blend, Garden Delight, Flower Blend and Garden Mate in early 2016 when I was in the process of preparing my garden for entry in the Toowoomba Carnival of Flowers, held in September. As this was the first time I'd used these products I wasn't sure what to expect, but testimonials from other gardeners and information I'd heard through the media gave me high expectations of Earthlife products. As it turned out, I wasn't to be disappointed. My lawn, a highlight of the garden, stayed green all through winter, which has never happened before and, while the winter wasn't particularly cold, we did experience a number of heavy frosts which in past years would have browned off the couch grass. Despite over 20,000 visitors trampling the lawn during the week of the carnival, I was very impressed that it recovered much more quickly than in past years and it's now looking better than ever. The several thousand annuals I planted for the competition remained healthy and the flowers lasted longer than they ever had before I started using Earthlife products. As this is only the first year of using Earthlife products, I expect that regular future use will result in even better performance from my garden and make my gardening experience a more satisfying and pleasing one." — Bob Ford, Grand Champion winner for City Gardens Toowoomba Carnival of Flowers, 2016. earthlife.com.au



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What's unique about Raw Vine Estate wines is they don't belong to a particular vineyard or have a cellar door to visit. Raw Vine's philosophy is to take the cellar door to you. This is why you will find the wines appearing at most major shows around Australia. Whether it's the Good Food & Wine Show, Mind Body Spirit or any other event, Raw Vine takes great pleasure in bringing Australia's finest-tasting organic, preservative-free wine to you. There's a number of small boutique vineyards that produce some exceptional fruit but don't have the means to get into the marketplace. Raw Vine Estate takes great care to source the best available organic fruit and make it into the best-tasting wine for your enjoyment. In fact, in 2017 Raw Vine Estate will be launching some exciting new and sought-after varieties. Follow Raw Vine on facebook or visit rawvineestate.com



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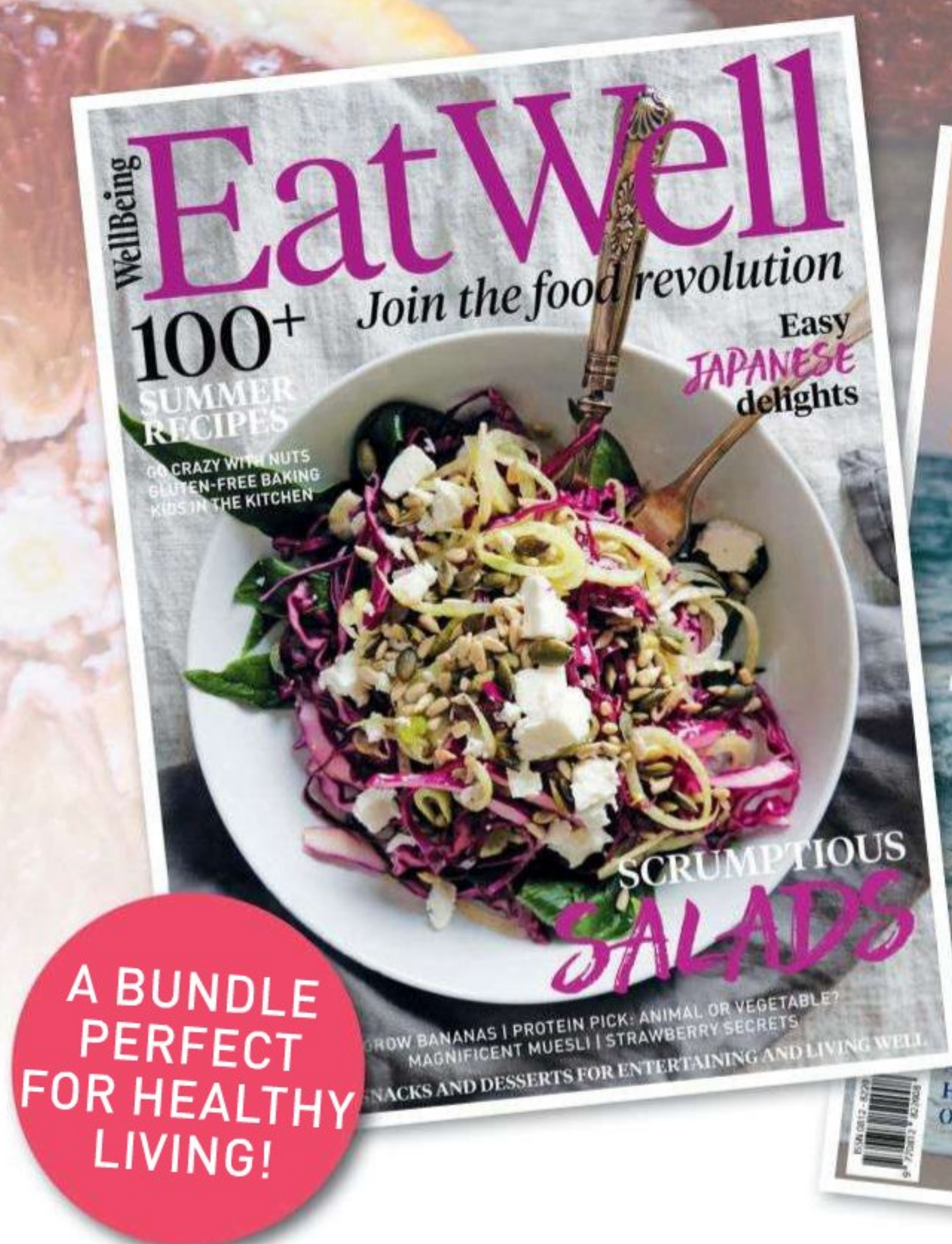
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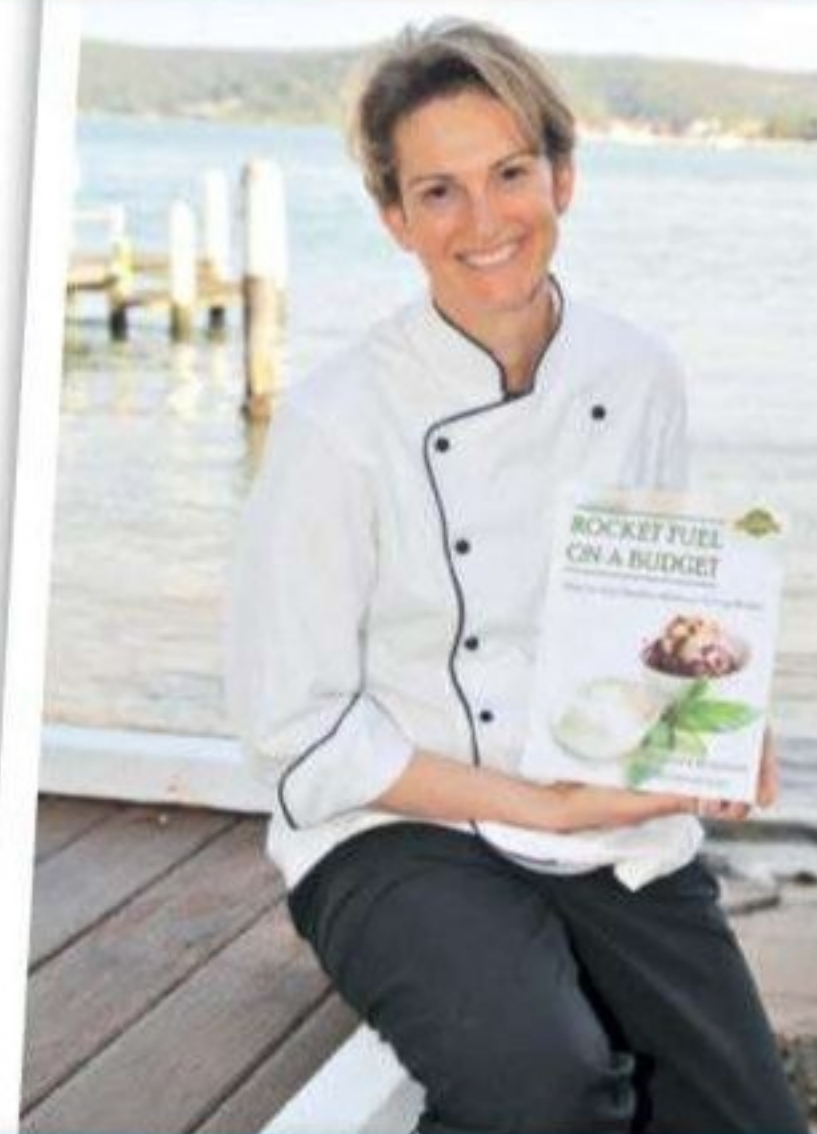
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